AFTER THE BATTLE

CASSINO
BATTLEFIELD TOUR

Number 13
QUARTERLY 75p

AFTER THE BATTLE

NUMBER 13

Edited by Winston G. Ramsey

Published by
Battle of Britain Prints International Ltd.
3 New Plaistow Road
Stratford, London E15 3JA
Telephone: 01-534 8833

Printed by Plaistow Press Magazines Ltd.

© Copyright 1976

After the Battle is published quarterly on the 15th February, May, August and November.

United Kingdom Distribution:
Seymour Press Ltd., 334 Brixton Road,
London SW9 7AG. Telephone 01-733 4444

Australian Distribution:
Technical Book and Magazine Company Pty. Ltd.
289-299 Swanston Street, Melbourne, Victoria 3000
Telephone 663 3951, 663 3955

North American Subscriptions:
Sky Books International, Inc.,
48 East 50th Street, New York, N.Y. 10022
Yearly rate (four issues) $10.95.

Malta: Floridia's Bookshop, 51 St. John Street,
Valletta. Telephone Central 24193

Dutch Language Edition:
J.J. Tijl B.V., Blaloweg 20, Zwolle, Holland.
Telephone 05200-10801.

French Language Edition:
SERA, 27, rue du Louvre, 75002 Paris.
Telephone 236.12.64.

CONTENTS

THE BATTLES FOR CASSINO
The First Battle 2
The Second Battle 7
The Third Battle 10
The Fourth Battle 13
The German Attack on the Castle 18
The Cavendish Road Tank Attack 20

CASSINO BATTLEFIELD TOUR 23

PERSONALITY
Oberjaeger Max Schmeling 36

UNITED STATES
The WWII Historical
Re-enactment Society 39

WRECK RECOVERY
Polish Hurricane at Loughton 42

PRESERVATION
The Royal Artillery Quad 45

IT HAPPENED HERE
The Bruneval Raid 46

Front Cover: The rebuilt Benedictine monastery on Monastery Hill at Cassino.

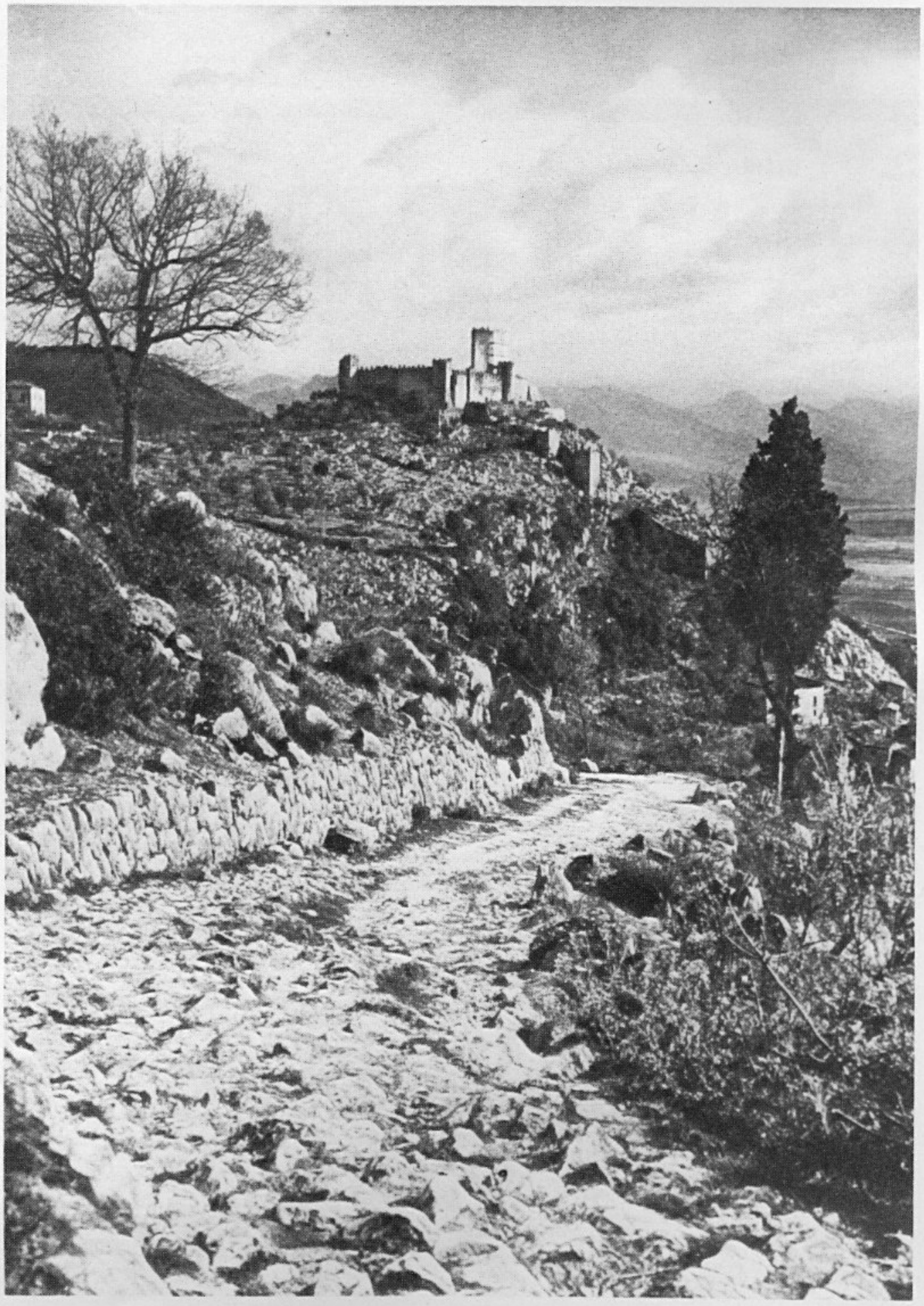
Centre Pages: The Quad Field Artillery Tractor, 1940 vintage, complete with limber and 25-pdr Mk. 1 gun, restored by 18 Command Workshops, Royal Artillery Wing, Bovington Camp, Dorset.

Back Cover: 'To the Brave' reads the inscription on the wrecked Sherman tank set up as a Polish memorial to the 4th Armoured Regiment below Point 593.

Acknowledgements:
The Bruneval raid includes extracts from *Instruments of Darkness* by Alfred Price by permission of the author, to be re-issued shortly by Macdonald and Jane's Ltd.

Photographs credited to the Imperial War Museum, London, are designated IWM.

ISSN: 0306-154X



Above: The Castle at Cassino, on Rocca Janicula Point 193 as it was before the fighting started (IWM). Below: Well and truly battered photographed from the Via Serpentina, the steep road to the Monastery.

THE BATTLES FOR CASSINO

BY COLONEL JOHN H. GREEN, RETD.

On September 3, 1943, the British Eighth Army, continuing its advance from El Alamein in Egypt, crossed the Straits of Messina and began the invasion of the Italian mainland. A few days later, the assault forces of the US Fifth Army, under General Mark Clark, landed on the Salerno beaches. After some bitter and savage fighting which nearly drove the Fifth Army into the sea, the beach-head was secured and by October 1 Naples had been captured. The Eighth Army operated on the eastern side of the Italian peninsula and, although the river Sangro was successfully crossed and Ortona captured by Canadian forces on December 28, the offensive ground to a halt. The American Fifth Army, meanwhile, had advanced slowly northwards, crossing river after river until it, too, found itself facing the formidable defences of Cassino and the German Gustav Line, some sixty miles north of Naples.

The Line ran from the Adriatic Sea across the waistline of the peninsula, through Atina and Cassino, to the Gulf of Gaeta in the Tyrrhenian Sea. The narrow Adriatic coastal plain on the eastern seaboard was a virtual cul-de-sac and led nowhere. Between the plain and Cassino were the Appenine Mountains, reaching heights of over 9,000 feet, and impassable in an Italian winter. Immediately to the west of Cassino was the Liri river valley, varying in width from five to seven miles. Between the western edge of the Liri valley and the Tyrrhenian Sea lay the rugged and forbidding Aurunci and Lepini Mountains, many of whose peaks were higher than those in the immediate vicinity of Cassino.

To General Alexander, commanding Allied Forces in Italy, it seemed, therefore, without

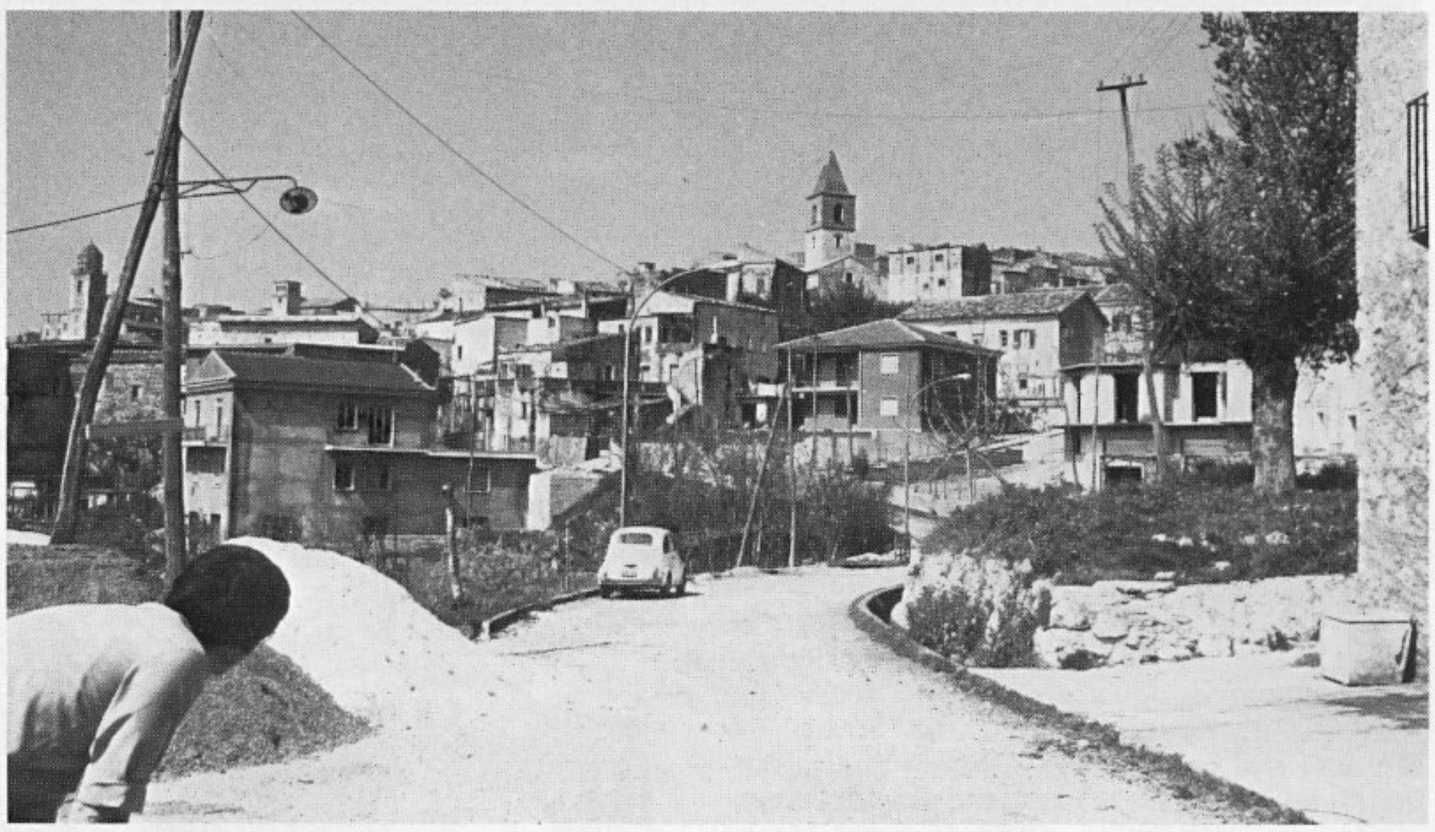
Top: The battle-scarred crossroads north of San Vittore on Route 6 — the road to Cassino. Although under German observation, L/Cpl. A. Thomas stands in full view directing traffic (IWM). Above: Colonel Green, our guide on our visit to Cassino, directs our Land-Rover at the same junction in April 1975.

adequate shipping to mount large-scale seaborne landings, that the Liri valley was the gateway to Rome and the only place where he could hope to find suitable terrain in which large, mobile forces could operate. But, even here, the obstacles were formidable in the extreme. Along the entire 25-mile front from north of Cassino to the Gulf of Gaeta and in front of the Gustav line proper, there ran a series of rivers, the Rapido in the north, the Gari across the Liri valley entrance and the Garigliano, in places over forty yards wide, between the valley and the Tyrrhenian Sea. As if the river obstacles were not enough, the

northern and southern ends of the Liri valley entrance were dominated by two great, natural bastions. In the south, Monte Maio, nearly 3,000 ft high, guarded the Garigliano crossings and its spurs overlooked the Gari river. North of Cassino town sat the majestic Monte Cairo, 5,000 ft high, and from it ran a massive ridge, which ended abruptly in 1,500 ft Monte Cassino (Monastery Hill), at whose base nestled the little town of Cassino. On the very top of Monte Cassino was the enormous structure of the famous Benedictine Monastery, and between it and Cassino town was the 600 ft hill with the ruins of a medieval castle on top, to become known to the Allies as Castle Hill.

The Germans had spent about three months reinforcing these natural defences. North of Cassino, the Rapido river had been dammed and the valley flooded, and both banks had been mined. Across the Liri valley entrance, guns, tank turrets and machine-gun emplacements had been dug in and protected with steel and concrete. The town of Cassino had been converted into a fortress, with tanks, self-propelled guns and pill-boxes inside buildings and, in the mountain positions, mortar, gun and machine-gun emplacements had been blasted out of solid rock, the whole protected by mines and wire entanglements. Such then was the Gustav Line in January 1944, perhaps the strongest and most formidable defensive position in Europe, and it took the Allies five months of bitter and savage fighting, much of it reminiscent of the trench warfare and appalling casualties of the First World War, before it was eventually breached.

There were four separate and distinct Battles of Cassino or, more accurately, of the Gustav Line, in January, February, March and May of 1944. The first in January and the fourth in May planned to outflank the Monte Cassino bastion; the second battle in February and third in March were direct, frontal attacks on it and both were preceded by concentrated bombing of one selected target, the Monastery itself and Cassino town respectively. The plan for the fourth battle was similar in general outline to that for the first but, whereas the Allies used seven divisions in January, they employed the equivalent of seventeen in the fourth. Throughout the five months from January to May there was the closest relationship and interplay between the Cassino battles and the Anzio bridgehead.



Above: San Vittore lies at the gateway to the Cassino Valley and was bitterly defended by German forces. It was finally entered by Task Force Allen of the US 6th Armoured Infantry on January 6, 1944. When this photo was taken, the road was still under German observation (US Army). Below: Under the observation of the Editor in 1976.

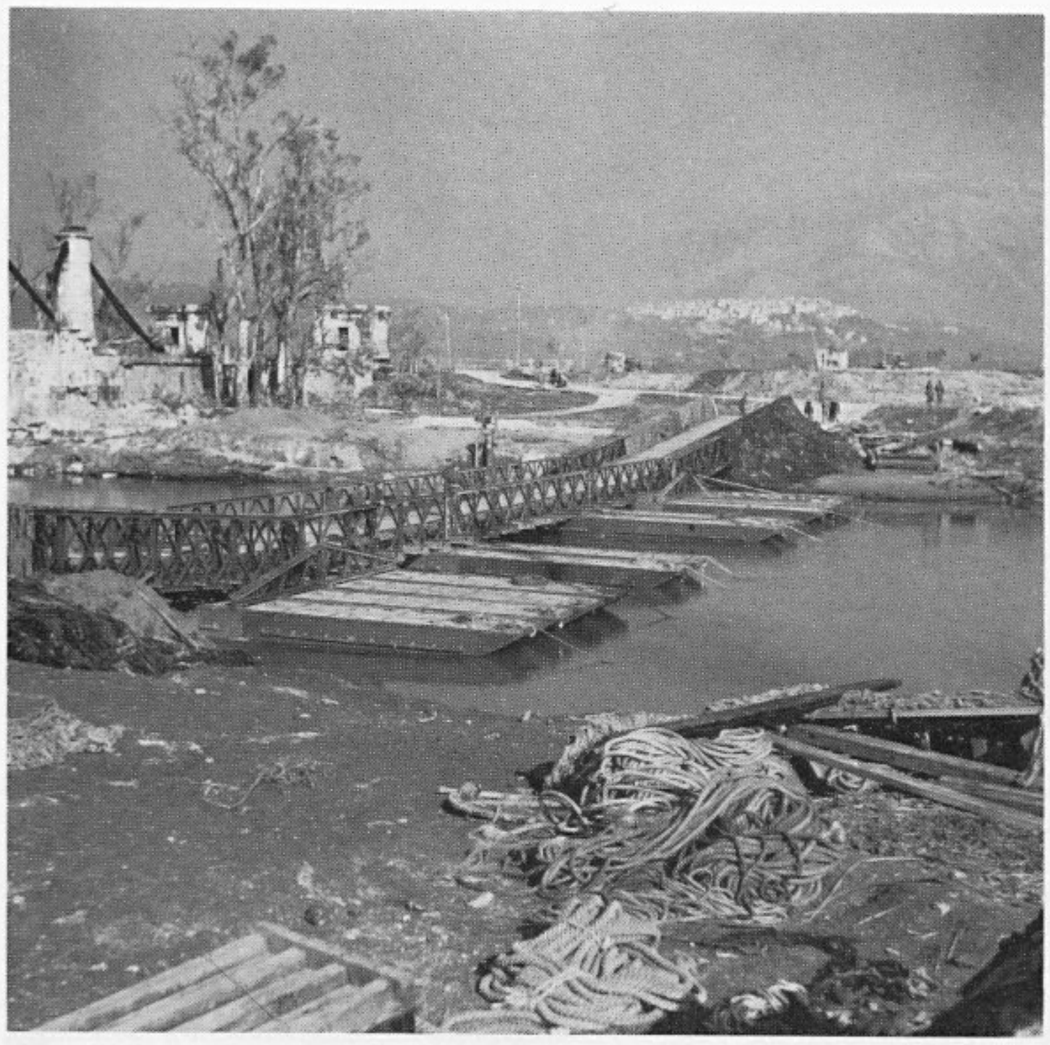
The First Battle

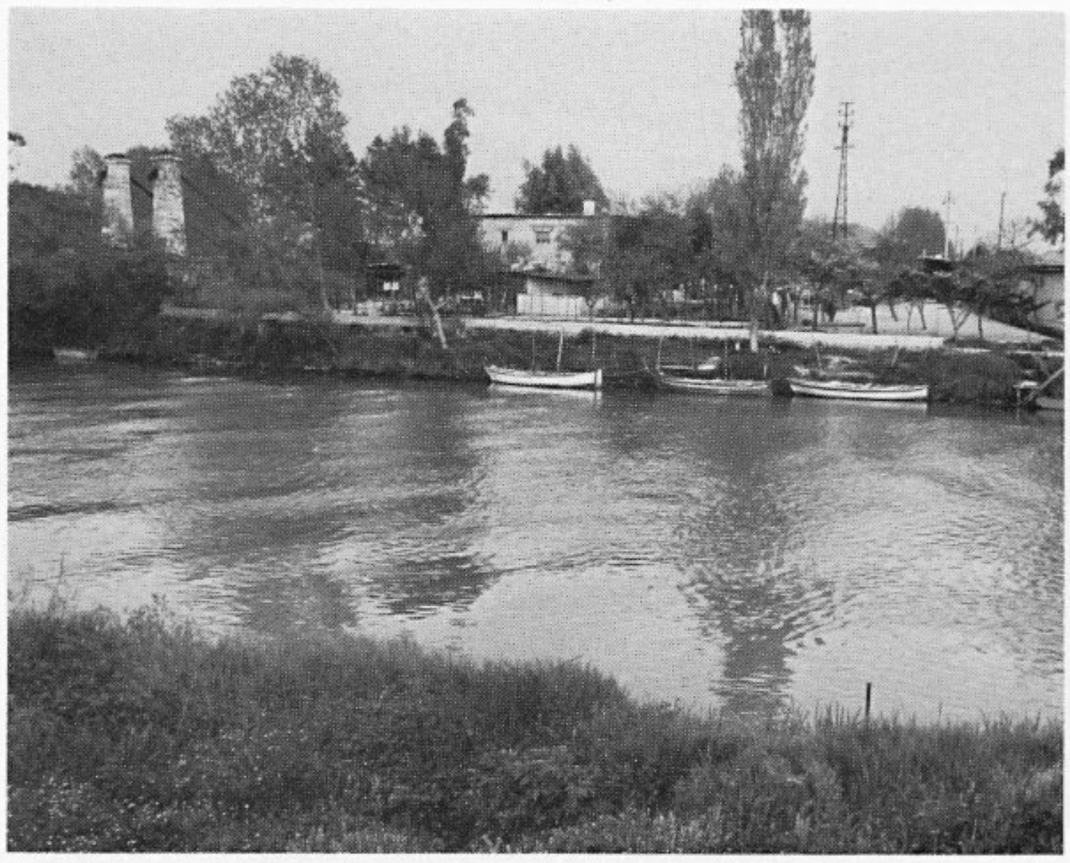
The first battle of Cassino took place between January 12 and February 12. General Alexander's directive to General Mark Clark of the Fifth Army was 'to make as strong a thrust as possible towards Cassino and Frosinone (on the route to Rome) shortly before the Anzio assault landing to draw in enemy reserves which might be employed against the landing forces and then to create a breach in his front through which every opportunity will be taken to link up rapidly with the seaborne operation'. Clark's plan was a three-pronged attack, in the mountains north of the Cassino position, a left hook across the river Garigliano near the coast, and a thrust in the centre up the Liri valley. Defending the Garigliano front was the German 94th Infantry Division, and the 15th Panzer Grenadier Division held the Liri valley entrance.

On January 12, the French Corps under General Juin attacked in the mountains north of Cassino and made good, if slow, progress in the appalling wintry conditions. On January 17, the 10th British Corps, on the left flank of the US Fifth Army, began their attack across the Garigliano river between the Gulf of Gaeta and the Liri valley, with 5th British Division in the coastal sector and 56th British Division directed towards Castelforte and the high ground overlooking the Ausente river. By dawn the following day, these two divisions had ten battalions across the Garigliano. Later in the day, with 5th Division on the Minturno ridge and 56th Division on the high ground on either side of Castelforte, the German Commander-in-Chief, Feldmarschal Kesselring, ordered the 29th and 90th Panzer Grenadier Divisions and elements of the Hermann Goering Panzer Division to move south to help the sorely pressed 94th Division. On January 21, these formations strongly counter-attacked the British 10th Corps towards Suio and Monte Natale and although the latter, after bitter fighting, just held on, these strong German reinforcements put paid to any hope of advance up the Ausente valley into the Liri plain.

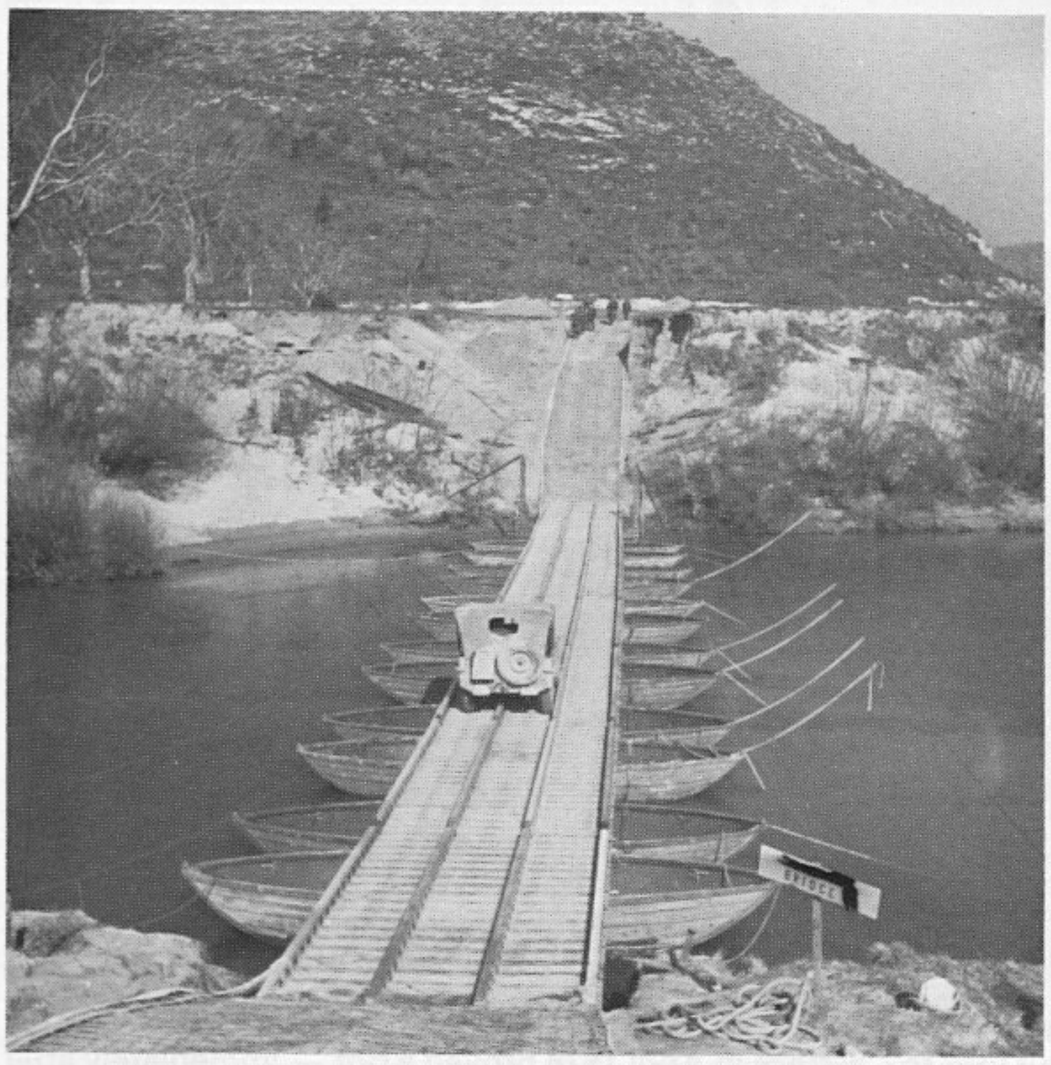
Early on January 22, the US VI Corps, with 1st British Infantry Division and the 3rd US Division, landed at Anzio, taking the Germans completely by surprise. But Kesselring reacted very quickly and at once withdrew parts of the 29th and 90th Panzer Grenadier Divisions and the Hermann Goering Panzer Division from the Garigliano front in an attempt to seal off the Anzio bridgehead. And thus began the see-saw relationship between Anzio and Cassino.

However, after this promising beginning to the first battle of the Gustav Line, matters did not go well elsewhere. The British 46th Division, whose task had been to attack across the Garigliano opposite San Ambrogio at the southern end of the Liri valley entrance in support of the US II Corps further north, managed in thick fog to get only one company across the swirling river and this attack was abandoned. A few miles further north, Mark Clark's plan was for the US 36th (Texas) Division of the US II Corps to force crossings over the Gari river to enable Combat Command B of the US 1st Armoured Division to pass through into the Liri valley. This attack proved disastrous. The 141st Regimental Combat Team (roughly equivalent to a British Brigade) was to cross at an S-bend in the river north of the village of Sant' Angelo in Theodice and 143rd RCT at two points south of the village. Everything went wrong from the start. The open approach to the east bank of the river was shrouded in heavy fog on the night of January 20, and intense German machine-gun, mortar and shell fire engulfed the Americans as they carried their assault boats and bridging materials to the river. The tapes marking the minefield gaps were partially destroyed and some troops soon became victims of anti-personnel mines. The actual crossings became a nightmare and, by dawn on January 21 only two and a half companies of 141st RCT had managed to get across the river. Only one of four footbridges, and that damaged, remained by first light. South of Sant' Angelo, the 1st Battalion of





Left and above: In the British 10 Corps sector, the principal obstacle during the First Battle was the Garigliano river. Here a pontoon Bailey bridge spans the river beside the original Via Appia road bridge blown by the Germans (IWM).



Left: Further along the Garigliano towards Cassino, another crossing site was named 'Skipton Bridge' (censored in photograph) leading from 'Sun Track' (IWM). Above: Greatly overgrown nothing remains at the site today.

Left: The scene of destruction in Cervaro east of Cassino photographed by Sergeant Hewitt on February 23 (IWM). Above: Plazza Vittorio Emanuele in April 1975.

Left and above: A Sherman of the Fifth Army, having crossed the Garigliano, advances through battered Lorenzo (IWM).

143rd RCT were over by dawn but was forced back to the east bank. There was complete confusion at the second crossing and no troops of the 3rd Battalion got across.

The assault was renewed and during the evening and night of January 21, the 3rd Battalion and two Companies each of the 2nd and 1st Battalions managed to get over the river. Although they succeeded in pushing their bridgehead some 500 yards beyond the river, they were forced to withdraw to the east bank on the morning of January 22. Further upstream, 141st RCT succeeded in getting most of the rifle companies of two battalions into their small bridgehead, but only disaster awaited them. All contact was lost and it proved impossible to reinforce them or get supplies across. Gradually the noise of fighting died down and it was all over. A few survivors managed to swim back in the icy waters. The US 36th Division suffered 1,681 casualties—143 killed, 663 wounded and 875 missing.

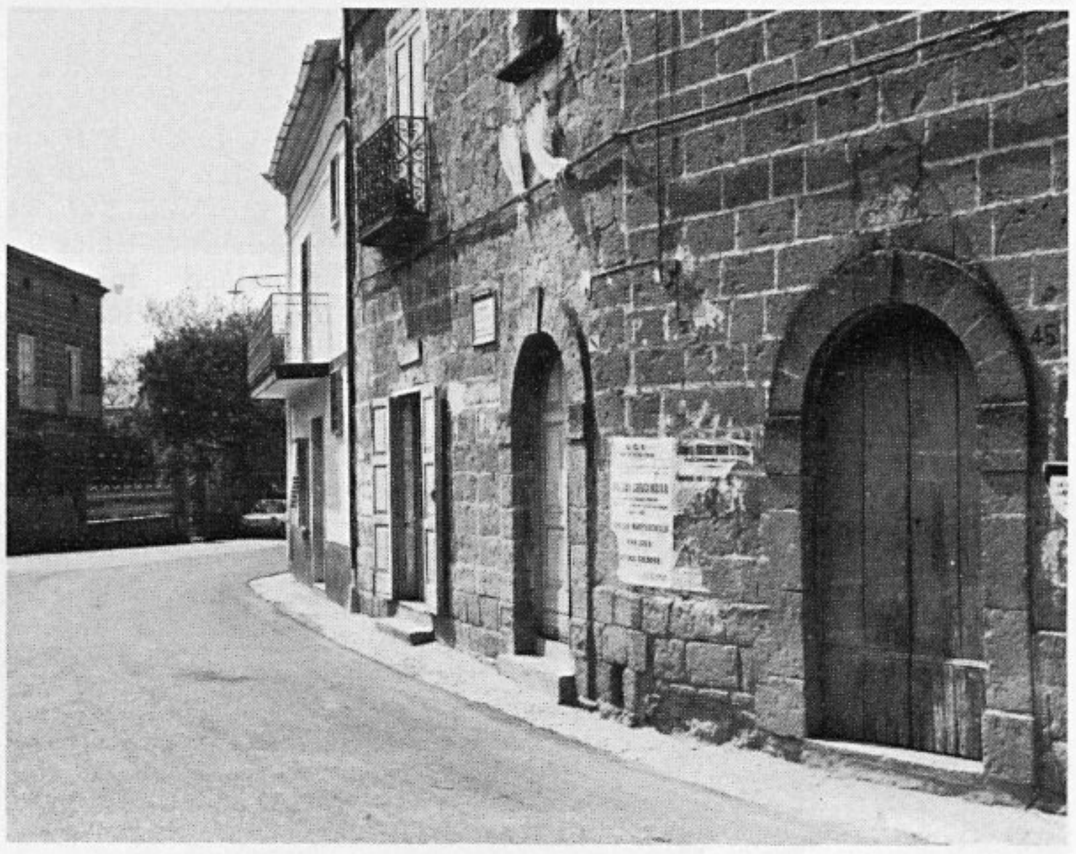
After the failure of this frontal attack against the Liri valley and with the British 10th Corps' advance from the Garigliano bridgehead halted, General Mark Clark decided that his next main effort would be an attempt to envelop the whole Cassino sector from the north. General Juin's French Corps was to direct itself towards Terelle and Piedimonte and the US 34th Division would cross the Rapido, north of Cassino, wheel inside the French and attack the mountains north of and behind Monte Cassino.

Although the Rapido river valley had been flooded to become a quagmire and the area was protected by fields of anti-personnel mines and masses of barbed wire, 135th and 168th Infantry Regiments succeeded in capturing Points 156 and 213 and the village of Caira by January 31. To the right of the Americans, the French Expeditionary Corps had taken Monte Belvedere and Monte Abate but found the way to Terelle blocked by 90th Panzer Grenadier Division. The daunting task now facing the US 34th Division was to force their way up the bare and rocky mountain-sides, wheel left and attack southwards towards Monte Cassino and the northern edge of the Liri valley. They were reinforced by 142 RCT of the US 36th Division, which came in on the right of the 34th Division, between it and the French. Later the remainder of the 36th Division was moved to this sector.

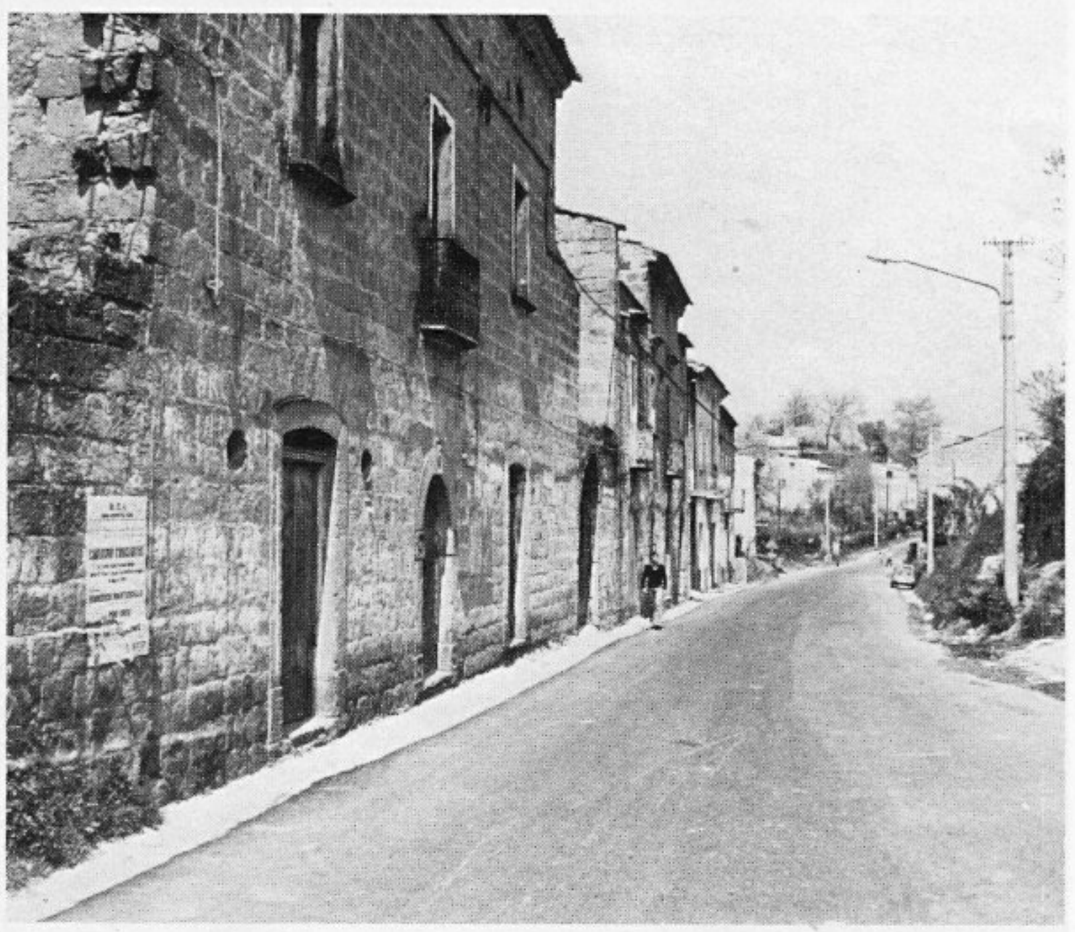
The terrain now facing the Americans was formidable in the extreme, quite apart from the appalling conditions of an Italian winter. Immediately in front of them was Monte Castellone, 2,500 ft high, a limb of the 5,000 ft Monte Cairo. Running southwards from Castellone was a ridge to Point 706. Here the ridge separated into two spurs, one continuing south-westwards through Colle S. Angelo, nearly 2,000 ft, to Point 575, some 2,000 yards west of Monte Cassino, and the

Above: Civilians in Castrese watch German prisoners being marched back to a POW Camp (IWM). Below: Our visit to Castrese in April 1976 proved a riot — immediately after this picture was taken, we were surrounded by eager villagers. The original picture bears at least 10,000 Italian fingerprints!

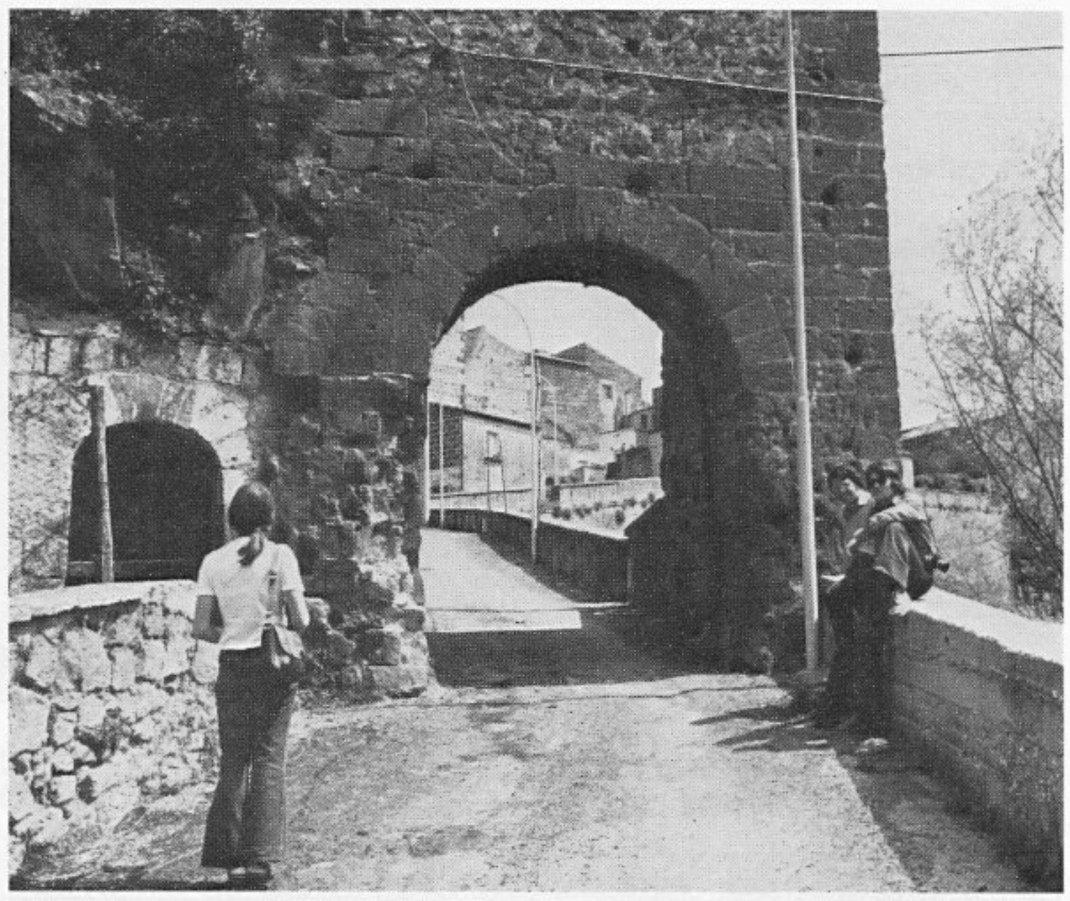
Left and above: East of Minturno lies the little mountain village of Tufo, stoutly defended by the Germans as part of the right flank of their Gustav line positions. Now occupied by a Tommy and 48 tins of beans! (IWM).



Left and above: Nearer Cassino, these Belgian Commandos were photographed after spending two weeks in the mountains north of the Garigliano mopping up German positions — here they parade in La Vaglie where they were billeted (IWM).



Left: After the parade they line up outside the cookhouse (IWM). Above: La Vaglie has changed little over thirty years making an almost exact comparison photograph.

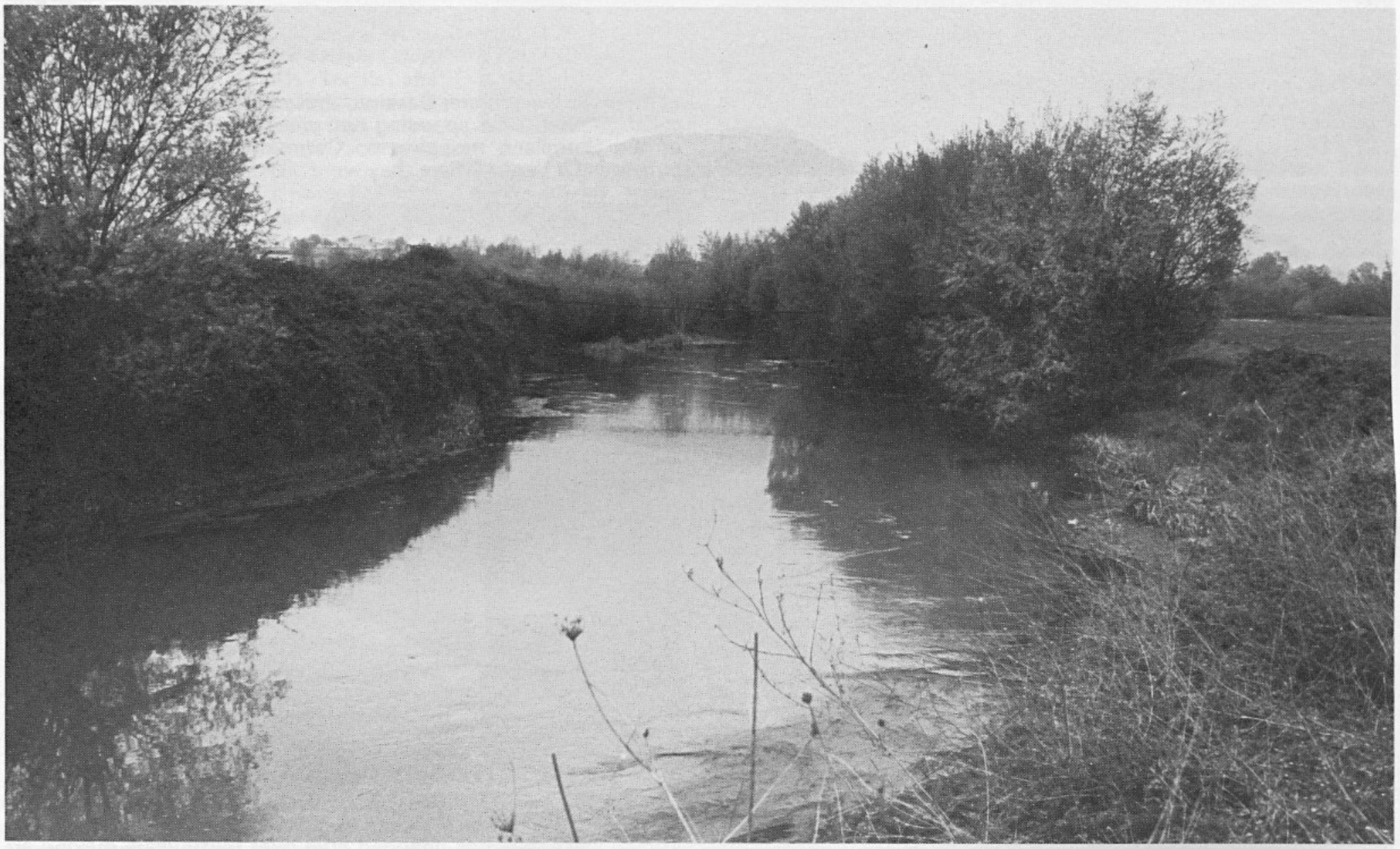


Left: By the time this picture was taken Mignano, on Route 6, was behind Allied lines. Here, three New Zealand gunners watch the sights — Cassino is ten miles away (IWM). Above: Two loafers on the After the Battle team watch the sights in 1976!

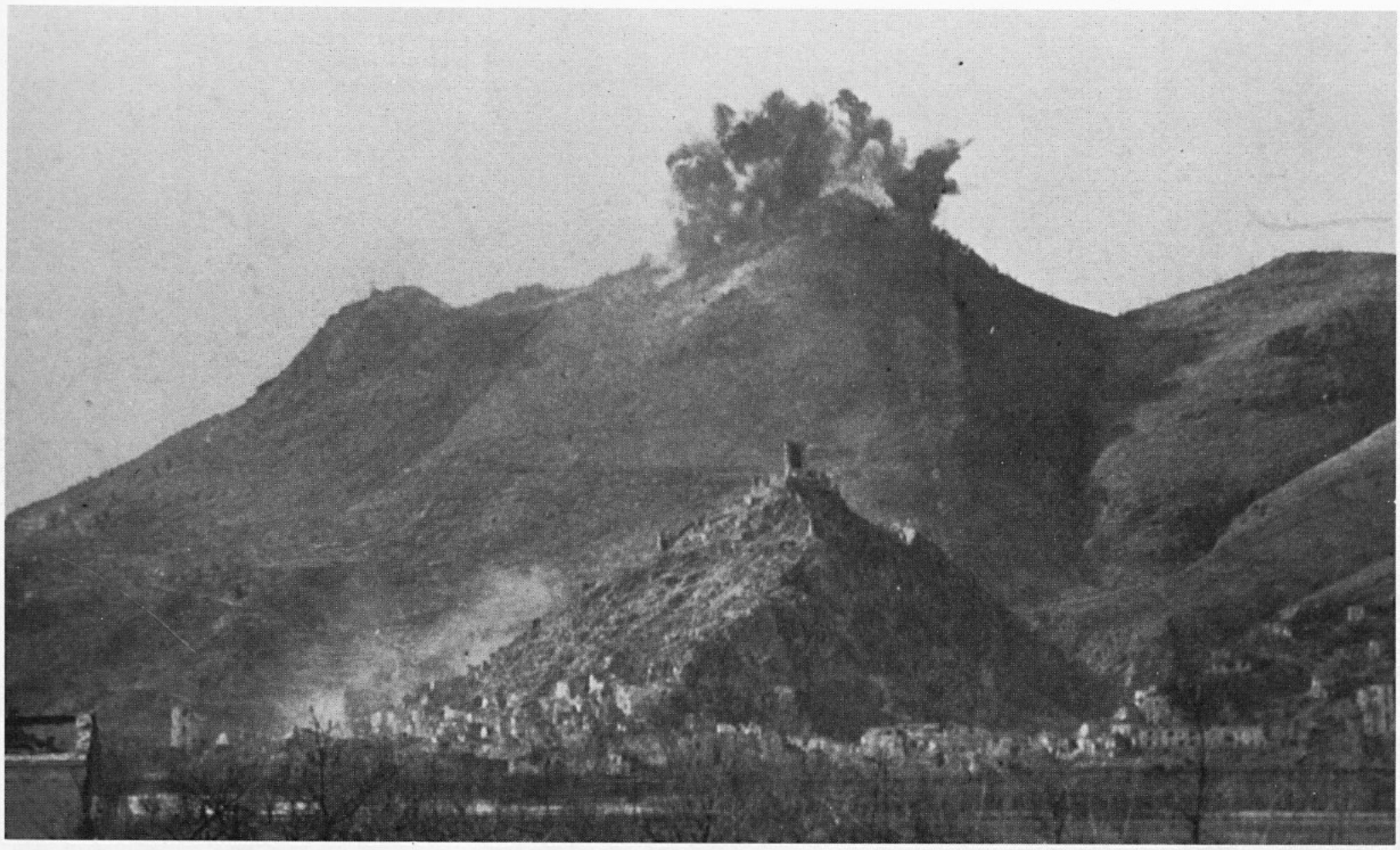
second dropping to Albaneta Farm at about 1,500 feet. Parallel with the Point 706-Point 575 ridge ran another from Maiola Hill to Point 593 (to become known as Snakeshead Ridge), this latter being about 1,000 yards west of the Monastery. Between 593 and the Monastery was a saddle with a knoll, Point 444, in the middle. Over the whole of this area, the ground was rough and stony and broken with knolls, small ridges, hollows and clefts, the whole liberally endowed with huge boulders, rocks and patches of scrub and thorn. In short, everything to aid the defender and nothing to help the attacker.

However, in spite of all this and most determined German opposition, which now included units of the 1st Parachute Division, the two American divisions, fighting with the greatest courage and determination, advanced yard by yard and captured Monte Castellone, Monte Maiola, Point 706 and Point 175 opposite Castle Hill by February 3. During the next few days, in bitter cold, rain, sleet and snow, Point 593 was reached and changed hands three times in three days, but in the end remained in German hands. Between Snakeshead Ridge and the Monastery, furious and gallant attempts to take Point 444 failed in face of intense and relentless German cross-fire. By February 12 both the Americans and the German defenders had fought themselves to a standstill. The average strength of some American rifle companies was thirty men. Their artillery had fired 199,293 rounds. Their magnificent efforts had brought them to within a few hundred yards of the crests of Monte Cassino and only one and a half miles from Route 6 and the Liri valley below. The first Battle of Cassino was over. The cost was tragic; between January 23 and February 13, battle casualties in British 10th Corps amounted to 4,145, and in the American forces to 10,230.

The Cassino sector now became the responsibility of the New Zealand Corps, consisting of the 2nd NZ and 4th Indian Divisions. Because the US II Corps had so nearly overcome the Cassino position, it seemed that a further attempt might well succeed. Furthermore, a German counter-offensive was expected against Anzio and it was decided to launch the second battle of Cassino as soon as possible to save the bridge-head from deadlock and possible disaster. Anzio had originally been intended to break the Gustav Line deadlock; now an attack on the latter was needed to rescue Anzio.



The exact spot where the Texas Division crossed the Rapido—in the background the Monastery overlooks Cassino.



The Second Battle

Top: The opening Allied move to the Second Battle was the bombing of the Monastery overlooking Cassino town. Note how the old town straggled up the sides of Castle Hill in the middle-ground (IWM). Above: No . . . its OK . . . the Abbey was rebuilt—it's just lost in the haze on our photograph!

General Freyberg's plan for the second battle was for the 4th Indian Division, experts in mountain warfare, to capture Monte Cassino and the very experienced 2nd NZ Division to attack Cassino town from the south-east, along the line of the railway. After representations from General Freyberg and General Tuker, commanding 4th Indian Division, General Alexander decided that the attack was to be preceded by the bombing of the Monastery itself. At the time, there were very good and valid reasons to support this, but it proved an unhappy decision, for afterwards the Germans converted the ruins into an unassailable strong-point.

It was not before the night of February 14/15 that 7th Indian Infantry Brigade completed their take-over of the American positions and the bombing of the Monastery was scheduled for the morning of February 15. The 1st Battalion of the Royal Sussex Regiment found on their arrival on Snakeshead Ridge that, contrary to expectations, the Americans were not in possession of Point 593, the feature dominating Monte Cassino and nearly 200 feet higher. The 7th Brigade Commander, Brigadier Lovett, and his Divisional Commander, decided correctly that 593 must be captured before Monte Cassino itself could be attacked. This could not be done in daylight and the attack was therefore scheduled for the night of February 15/16, twelve hours after the bombing.

Between 9.25 a.m. and 1.32 p.m. on the morning of the 15th, 135 Fortresses and 87 Mitchells and Marauders dropped a total of 443 tons of bombs on the Monastery, a remarkable piece of precision bombing destined to be of no military advantage to the Allies, except for a temporary boosting of the morale of the soldiers in the vicinity. There was little room on Snakeshead Ridge to deploy his Battalion and Colonel Glennie, commanding the Royal Sussex, decided to attack Point 593 with one company, a total of three officers and sixty-three men. After creeping forward about fifty yards, they suddenly met intense machine-gun fire and were showered with grenades. It proved impossible, in the darkness, to find a way to the objective and the Company withdrew before dawn. Two officers and thirty-two men had been killed or wounded. The Royal Sussex tried again the next night, February 16/17, and this time the Commanding Officer used his whole battalion. The same vicious reception awaited them. However, after some wild and savage fighting, some men of D Company succeeded in reaching the summit of Point 593 but the German paratroopers of the 3rd Parachute Regiment could not be dislodged.

During the fierce and confused hand-to-hand fighting, bad luck intervened when the Germans fired three green Verey signals which happened to be the Royal Sussex's signal for withdrawal and some men began to pull back. However, it was clear to Colonel Glennie before dawn that his Battalion could not possibly stay in their exposed positions in daylight and he accordingly withdrew to his former positions along Snakeshead Ridge. Out of the total of 12 officers and 250 men who had taken part in the night's abortive work, 10 officers and 130 men had been killed, wounded or taken prisoner.

By now, the NZ Corps was ready to make the attack which had originally been planned to follow the bombing of the Monastery. The 4/6th Rajputana Rifles were to capture Point 593 and, if successful, exploit to Point 444, a few hundred yards below the Monastery. To their left, the 1/9th Gurkhas were to attack towards Point 444 and on their left, the 1/2nd Gurkhas had the Monastery itself as their objective. In the valley below Monte Cassino, the 28th NZ (Maori) Battalion was to cross the Rapido river and capture Cassino railway station, as a preliminary to forcing an entrance into the Liri valley.

At midnight on February 17/18, the Rajputana Rifles scrambled towards Point 593 and, like the Royal Sussex the night before, almost immediately met intense grenade, mortar and machine-gun fire. Their

Top: A German photograph taken inside the Monastery after its destruction (Bundesarchiv). Above: Although the building was restored exactly as the original, comparison photographs were not easy—especially as photography is forbidden inside the abbey.

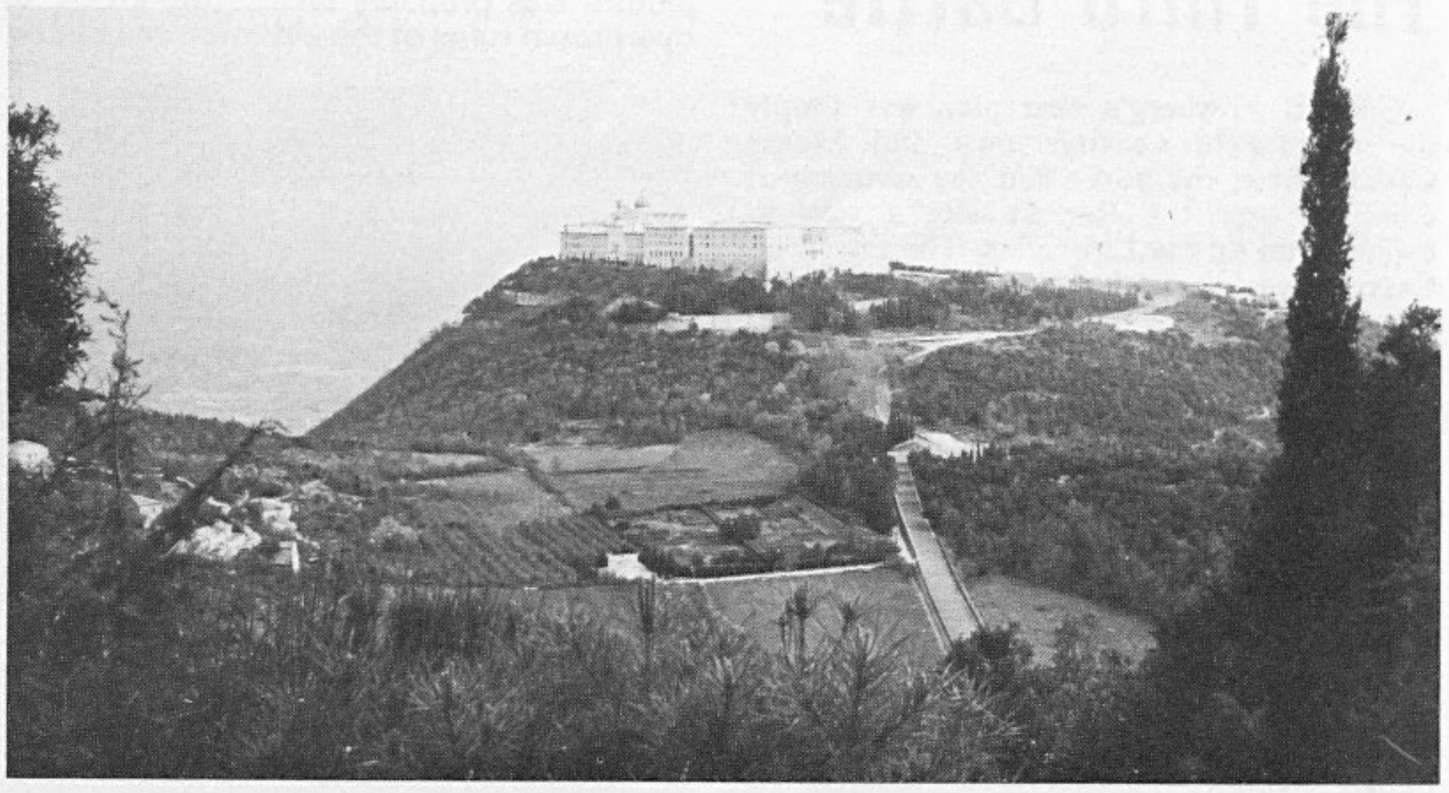
Above: Although decapitated, the statue of St. Benedict remained standing amid the surrounding destruction to be photographed by the Germans (Bundesarchiv).

Above: Because of a rebuilt cloister, it is not possible to take an exact comparison today. Centre right: St. Benedict has, however, regained his head although he is somewhat worse for wear.

advance was halted about one hundred yards from their objective and, despite brave and bitter fighting, the Battalion was pinned to the ground and unable to move forward. Although Point 593 had been neither captured nor neutralised, the 1/9th Gurkhas began their attack towards Point 444 at 2.15 a.m. (February 18). The leading companies managed to advance about three hundred yards when they, too, were stopped by the intense German fire. At 3.30 a.m., the 1/2nd Gurkhas began their attack against objectives no more than about 500 yards distant and dashed forward to gain cover from a belt of scrub. This proved to be a dense thicket, liberally sown with anti-personnel mines and trip wires connected to mines. Although a handful of men tore through this obstacle, the Battalion was halted by the fierce German cross-fire, and the survivors were forced to fall back and dig in on the northern side of the thicket. At dawn, the battalions had no alternative but to withdraw and take up defensive positions among the rocks on the bare slopes. The Rajputana Rifles had suffered 196 casualties, including all their Company commanders, the 1/2nd Gurkhas lost 11 officers and 138 men and the 1/9th Gurkhas had sustained 96 casualties.

While the Indian battalions had been fighting hard in the mountains, the 28th NZ (Maori) Battalion had attacked along the railway line, at the front of Monte Cassino. After a slow but resolute advance, one Company captured the railway station but another Company found an insuperable obstacle, in the shape of a deep twenty-foot wide ditch, in front of their objective, a group of mounds called the 'Hummocks', some 300 yards south of the station engine shed. Although the New Zealand engineers had bridged the Rapido by 5.00 a.m. on February 18, they were unable to deal with two large demolitions before daylight, which made further engineer work impossible under observed fire. Later that day, the Germans counter-attacked with infantry and a handful of tanks, supported by heavy fire from guns, mortars and machine guns. The two Maori companies, weakened by casualties and unable to receive sufficient reinforcement, were forced to withdraw across the Rapido. Out of a force of about 200 men, 130 of them had become casualties. Thus the second battle of Cassino, like the first, so nearly succeeded but there was less to show for it. It was clearly necessary to adopt new tactics if the Gustav Line was to be breached decisively.

Above: Royal Sussex troops on Snakeshead ridge overlook Monastery Hill (IWM). Below: The wide path in the foreground leads to the Polish Cemetery.



Left: For these German prisoners being marched back along Route 6, the battle is over (IWM). Above: The building, Nos 16-18, is now the Generialmentari.

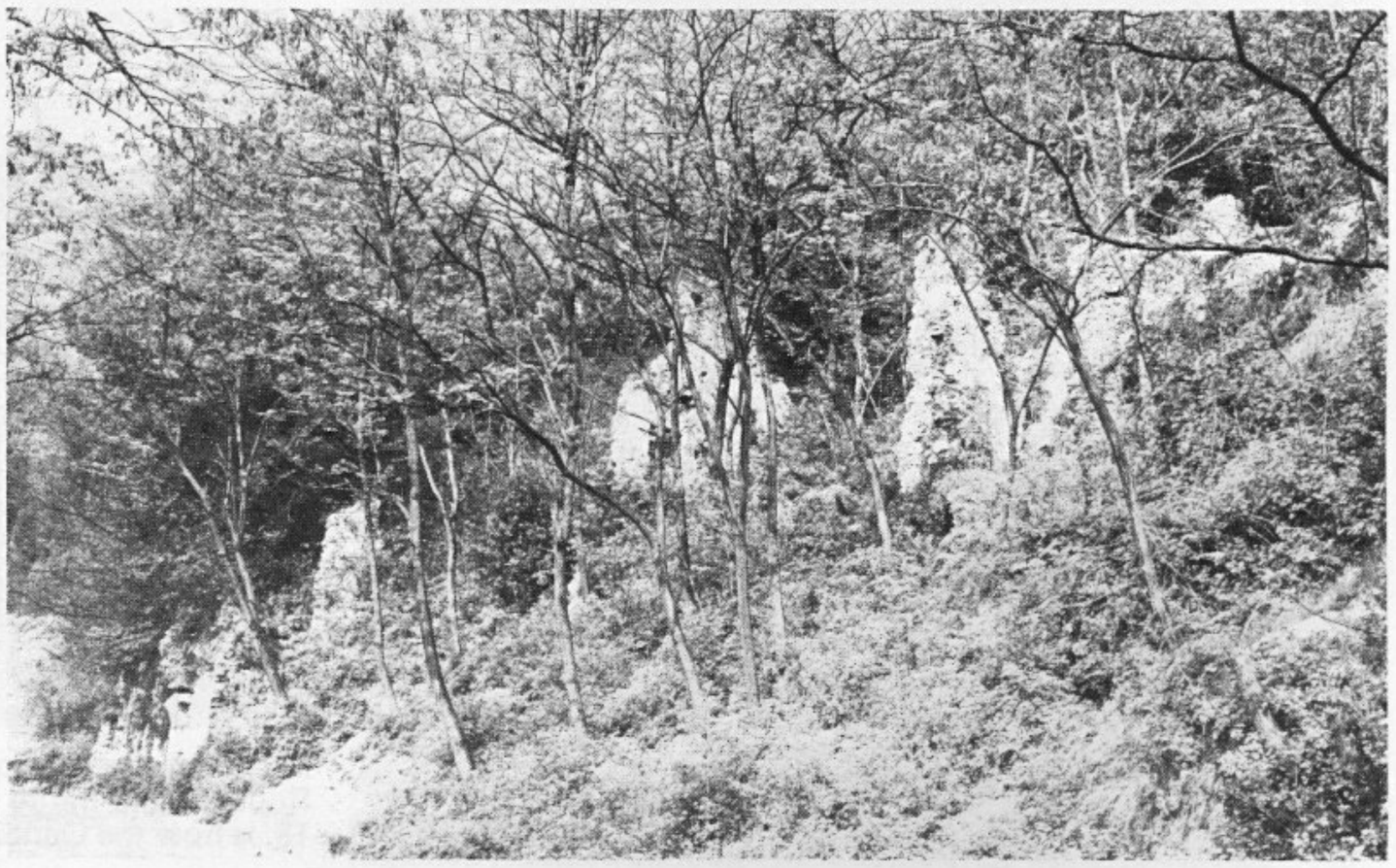
The Third Battle

Above: March 15 and the Third Battle begins with the bombing of Cassino town. The picture was probably taken from an OP on Monte Trocchio (IWM). Below: Today, the overgrown ruins of the old town can still be seen on the sides of Castle Hill.

General Freyberg's next plan was simply the capture of Cassino town and Monte Cassino from the north and the securing of crossings over the Rapido with a view to exploitation up the Liri valley. The attack on Cassino was to be preceded by the aerial bombardment and destruction of the town. All preparations were completed for the attack to start on February 24, but the weather broke the day before and the offensive had to be postponed for three weeks, while the New Zealanders led a troglodyte life in the pouring rain in their dank and insanitary holes, trenches and ruined buildings and the men of the 4th Indian Division hung on grimly in their soaked, windswept and freezing foxholes in the mountains above. During this period, the Germans, in no happier circumstances, carried out reliefs until the whole area of the Monte Cassino mountains and Cassino town were in the hands of the 1st Parachute Division, under Oberst Richard Heidrich.

The vile weather at last relented and the attack was fixed for March 15. Between 8.30 a.m. and 12 noon, Cassino town, from which the civilians had mercifully been removed some months earlier, was blown apart and reduced to heaps of rubble in a terrifying aerial bombardment. In three and a half hours, 455 aircraft dropped 992 tons of high explosive—more than 2,200 one thousand-pound bombs. Forty-seven per cent of these fell within one mile of the town centre and fifty-three per cent near the town and on Monte Cassino. The town was utterly laid waste; no single building was left intact. It was Passchendaele 1917 all over again. Unfortunately, some unscheduled targets were hit and 96 Allied soldiers and 140 civilians were killed. It was inconceivable that anybody or anything could survive such a holocaust, but, although half of the 2nd Battalion of the 3rd German Parachute Regiment perished, the survivors struggled out of the ruins and prepared themselves for the onslaught they knew must come.

Between noon and 8 p.m., 890 Allied guns fired more than 195,000 rounds on targets in and around Cassino town. The 25th NZ Battalion moved forward from their start line about 1,500 yards north of the town as soon as the bombing had ceased at midday. Their



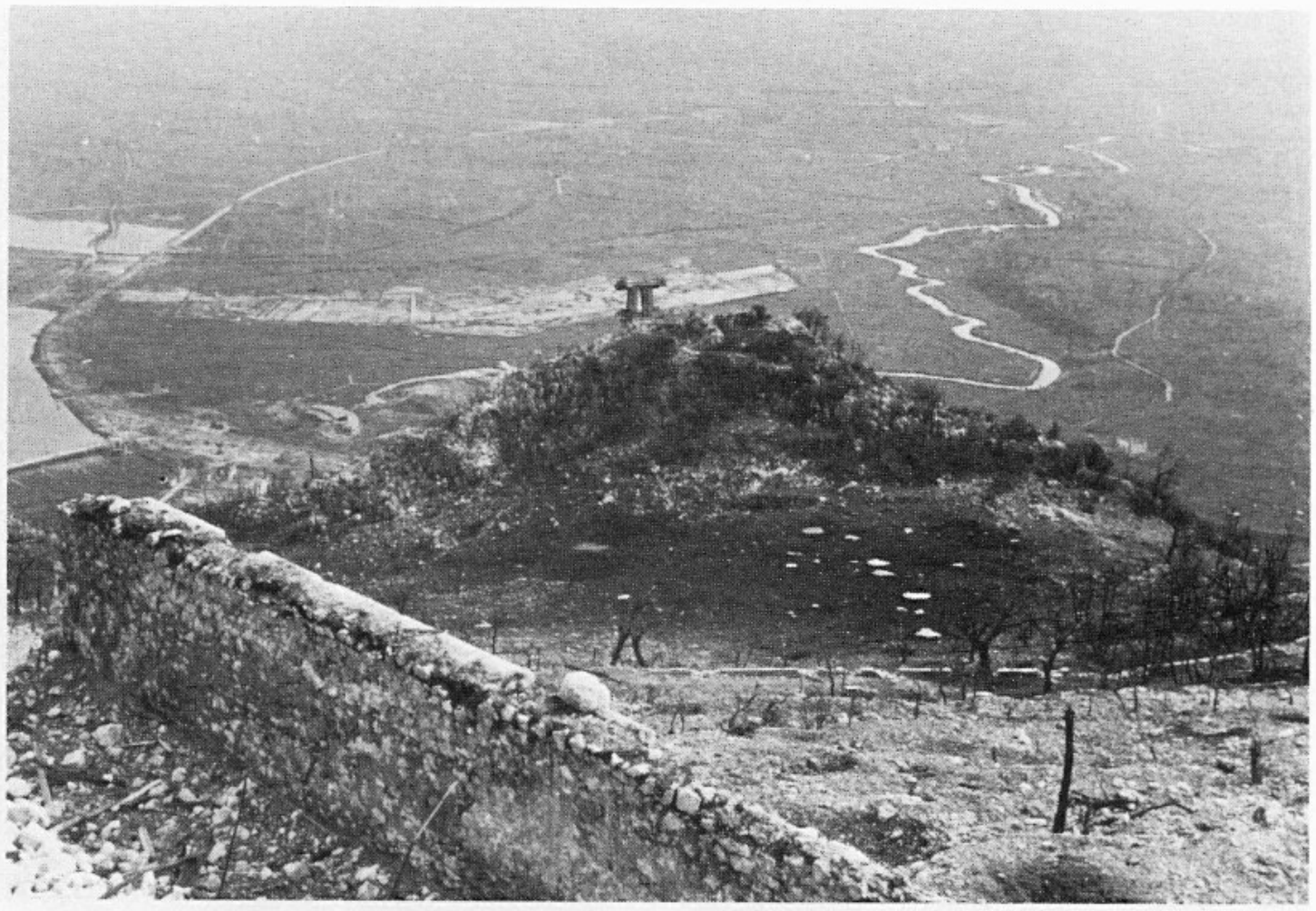
immediate objective was a line along Route 6 (the road to Rome) but, as soon as the leading infantry got beyond the prison at the northern edge of the town, they were met with concentrated rifle, machine gun, grenade and mortar fire. However, the New Zealanders fought their way forward, at a rate of advance of about one hundred yards an hour, from ruin to ruin, crawling round piles of rubble and scrambling from bomb crater to bomb crater. By dusk, one company had reached the northern branch of Route 6 and the vicinity of the ruined Convent. The Sherman tanks of 19th NZ Armoured Regiment made little progress against the piles of rubble.

In the meantime, however, a brilliantly executed attack by D Company of the 25th Battalion had captured Castle Hill (Point 193) by 4.45 p.m., after scaling the almost vertical hillsides.

As night fell, torrential rain started, turning craters into large ponds and bringing fighting in the ruins temporarily to a halt. But during the wet and dark night, operations continued on the eastern slopes of Monte Cassino and by 3 a.m. on March 16, the 1/4 Essex Regiment had taken over Castle Hill from the New Zealanders and had captured Point 165, about three hundred yards from the Castle, above one of the hairpin bends on the winding road from the town to the Monastery. Two companies of the 1/6th Rajputana Rifles managed to capture Point 236 (above the hairpin bend at Point 165), but were driven off and withdrew to the area of the Castle. The remainder of the battalion had been scattered by a heavy German artillery concentration and became lost for the remainder of the night. C Company of the 1/9th Gurkhas performed heroically and reached Hangman's Hill (Point 435), only a few hundred yards below the Monastery itself.

During the next night, March 16/17, the remainder of the Gurkhas reached Hangman's Hill but although A and B Companies of the 1/6th Rajputana Rifles managed to storm Point 236 at the third attempt, they were unable to hold it after dawn on the 17th. During the night of the 17/18th, two companies of the 4/6th Rajputana Rifles, acting as fighting soldiers and beasts of burden with much-needed supplies, succeeded in reaching the beleaguered garrison on Hangman's Hill but were unable to return across the bare slopes of Monte Cassino in daylight.

In the meantime, the New Zealanders had committed four infantry battalions in Cassino town and had succeeded after bitter and violent fighting in capturing the railway station and the 'Hummocks' just south of it. Most of the town was in their hands but they were quite unable to capture either the ruin of



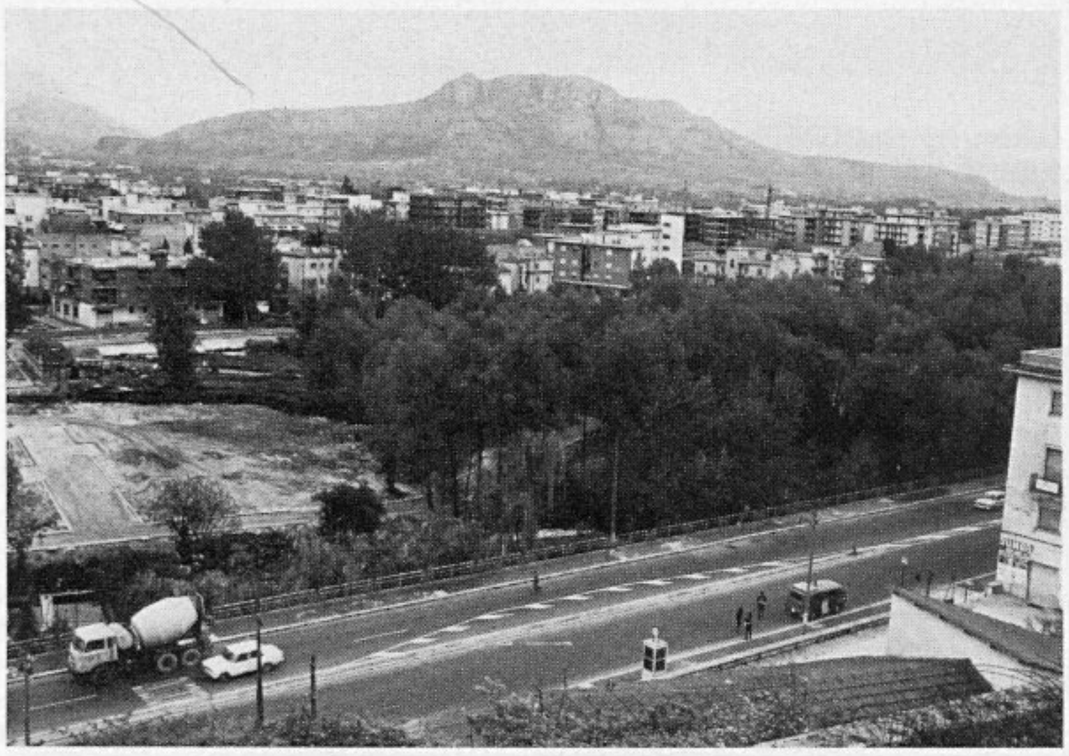
Above: A photograph taken by the Germans of Galgenberg (Hangman's Hill) from the terraced slopes just below the Monastery. The railway station is to the left of the hill (Bundesarchiv). Below: Our comparison taken looking across the valley to Monte Trocchio. We found a rusted British helmet on the lower terrace.

Above: Picture taken by Feldwebel Georg Schmitz of the first German assault gun in Cassino outside the ruins of Continental Hotel on the right.

Above: Our exact comparison of where the assault gun stood — the Excelsior Hotel (which replaced the Continental) now occupies a site behind the photographer.

Above: Two German pictures, taken from the ruins of the Hotel des Roses, looking across the Rapido river towards Monte Trocchio (Bundesarchiv).

Below: Our photographs show the site of the old Hotel des Roses now occupied by the large building in the foreground. The trees obscure the view of the river.



the Continental Hotel, facing down Route 6, or the Hotel des Roses and that part of Route 6 which ran along the foot of Monte Cassino before turning right into the Liri valley. Although a company of the 24th New Zealand Battalion reached and held point 202, on the slope of Monte Cassino behind the Continental Hotel, on March 18, their attack on the hotel itself failed.

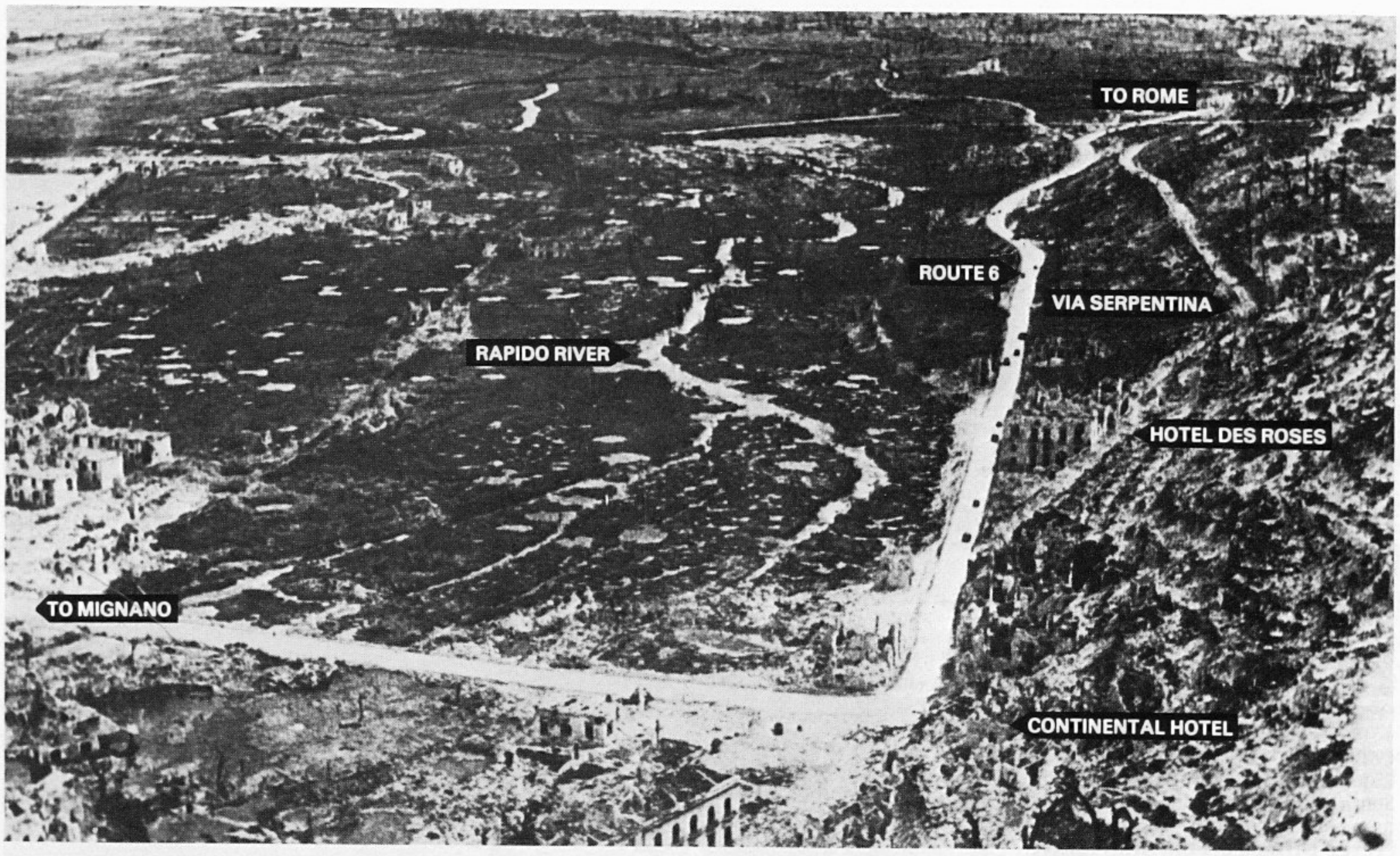
In the early hours of the 19th, just as they were setting out from the Castle on the hazardous journey to join the Gurkhas on Hangman's Hill, in preparation for an assault on the Monastery, the 1/4th Essex were violently counter-attacked and only parts of two companies managed to join the Gurkhas. There then occurred a quite extraordinary fight for the Castle (described later in detail) which resembled a medieval siege. German paratroopers raced down the mountainside and repeatedly attacked the Castle, clambering up the walls in ferocious attempts to capture it. Although suffering many casualties A and C Companies of the 1/4th Essex and about a company of the 4/6th Rajputana Rifles repulsed all attacks.

On the same day, an armoured force of sixteen Sherman tanks of the 20th NZ Armoured Regiment, three Shermans and five Stuarts of 7th Indian Infantry Brigade and sixteen Stuarts of the 760th US Tank Battalion made the steep climb up the track from Caira village and attacked Albaneta Farm, behind Snakeshead ridge (also described later in detail). The force reached the farm and initially subdued the German paratroopers' fire from both Points 593 and 575. Although they reached a point less than a thousand yards from the Monastery, it soon became clear that without infantry to attack infantry, the tanks could not proceed further and at 5.30 p.m. the force was recalled. Six tanks had been destroyed and sixteen damaged.

Colonel Green, who has organised three British Army Battlefield Tours to Cassino, points out the remains of a mortar pit, quite near the Polish Monument on Point 593.

It also proved impossible to mount the attack on the Monastery from Hangman's Hill and on March 23 the Allied Command decided to call off the offensive. On the night of 24/25th, the Gurkhas, Essex and Rajput companies were successfully withdrawn from their perch on Hangman's Hill, where they had been supplied by air since March 18.

Thus ended the third battle of Cassino. The 2nd NZ Division had lost 63 officers and over 800 men killed, wounded and missing and the 4th Indian Division 65 officers and over 1,000 men.

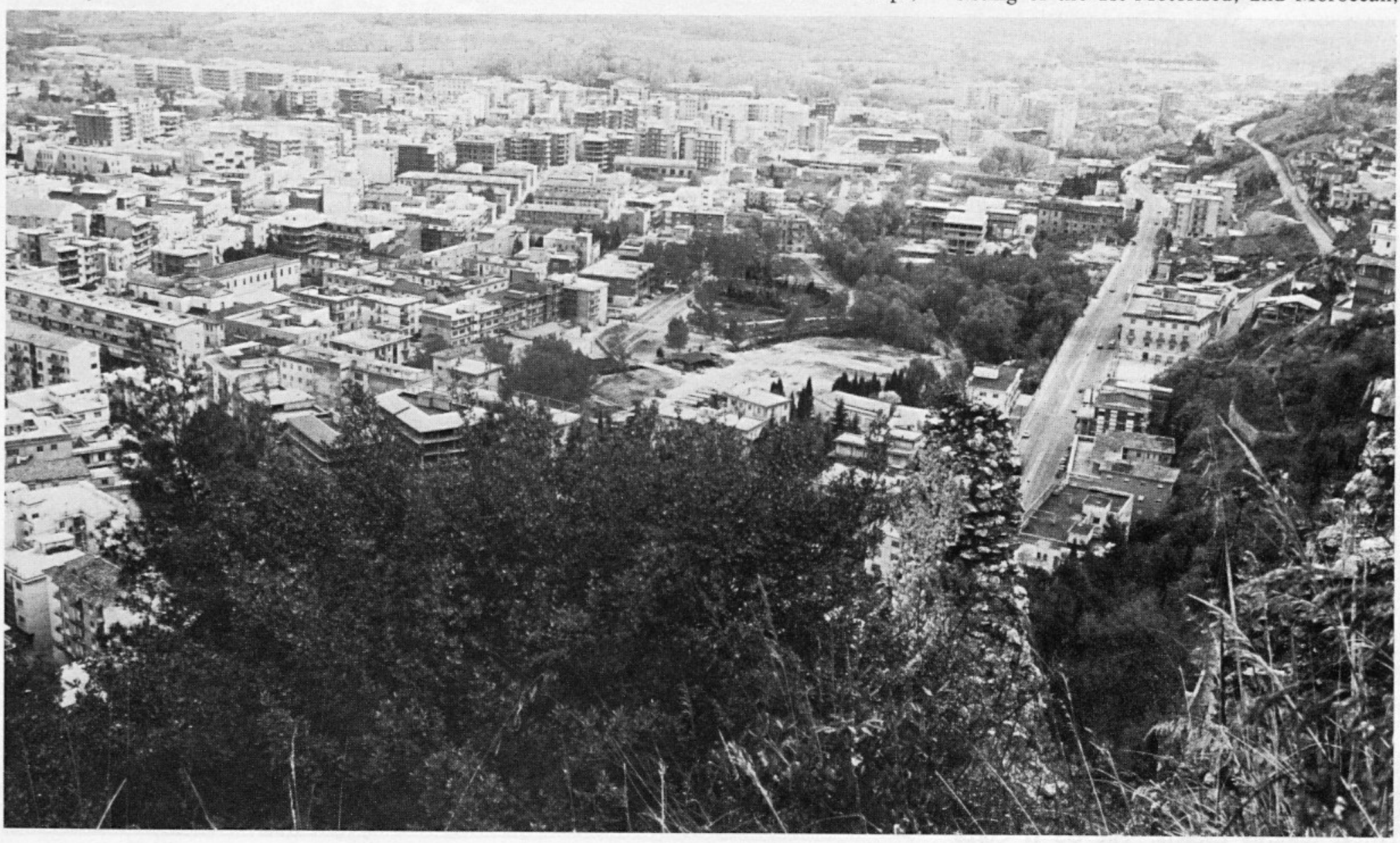


The Fourth Battle

Above: Cassino town photographed from the Castle ramparts after the Fourth Battle. Route 6 passes the ruins of the Continental Hotel and the Hotel des Roses (IWM). Below: A striking comparison with rebuilt Cassino.

Three attempts had now been made to break through the Gustav Line and advance up the Liri valley. Clearly the stalemate at both Cassino and Anzio would only be broken by a supreme effort. General Alexander considered that the Allies must have a local superiority of at least 3:1 in infantry to have a reasonable chance of breaking through the Gustav Line. At this time, the overall Allied superiority was only five divisions (28 divisions to the Germans' 23) and so some rearrangement was necessary. General Alexander, therefore, took steps to concentrate in the twenty miles of front between Cassino and the Gulf of Gaeta the equivalent of 17 divisions, 8 of the US Fifth Army and 9 from the British Eighth Army.

The fourth battle of Cassino therefore was on a quite different dimensional plane from the previous three. Where a brigade had served in the first battle, two divisions were used in the fourth. The 2nd Polish Corps, consisting of the 3rd Carpathian and 5th Kresowa Divisions, was to capture the mountainous area north of Monte Cassino and the Monastery itself. The 13th British Corps, comprising 4th British Division, 78th British Division, 8th Indian Division and 6th British Armoured Division, was to force the Liri valley entrance. On the left, the US II Corps, with 85th and 88th Infantry Divisions, and the French Expeditionary Corps, consisting of the 1st Motorised, 2nd Moroccan,



Left: Two British soldiers of the Eighth Army on the outskirts of the old town of Cassino (IWM). Above: This spot, although unrecognisable today, can be confirmed by the position of the Castle on the skyline. This is now the centre of rebuilt Cassino.

3rd Algerian and 4th Moroccan Divisions and 12,000 Moroccan native mountain troops, were to attack through the Aurunci Mountains between the Liri valley and the sea.

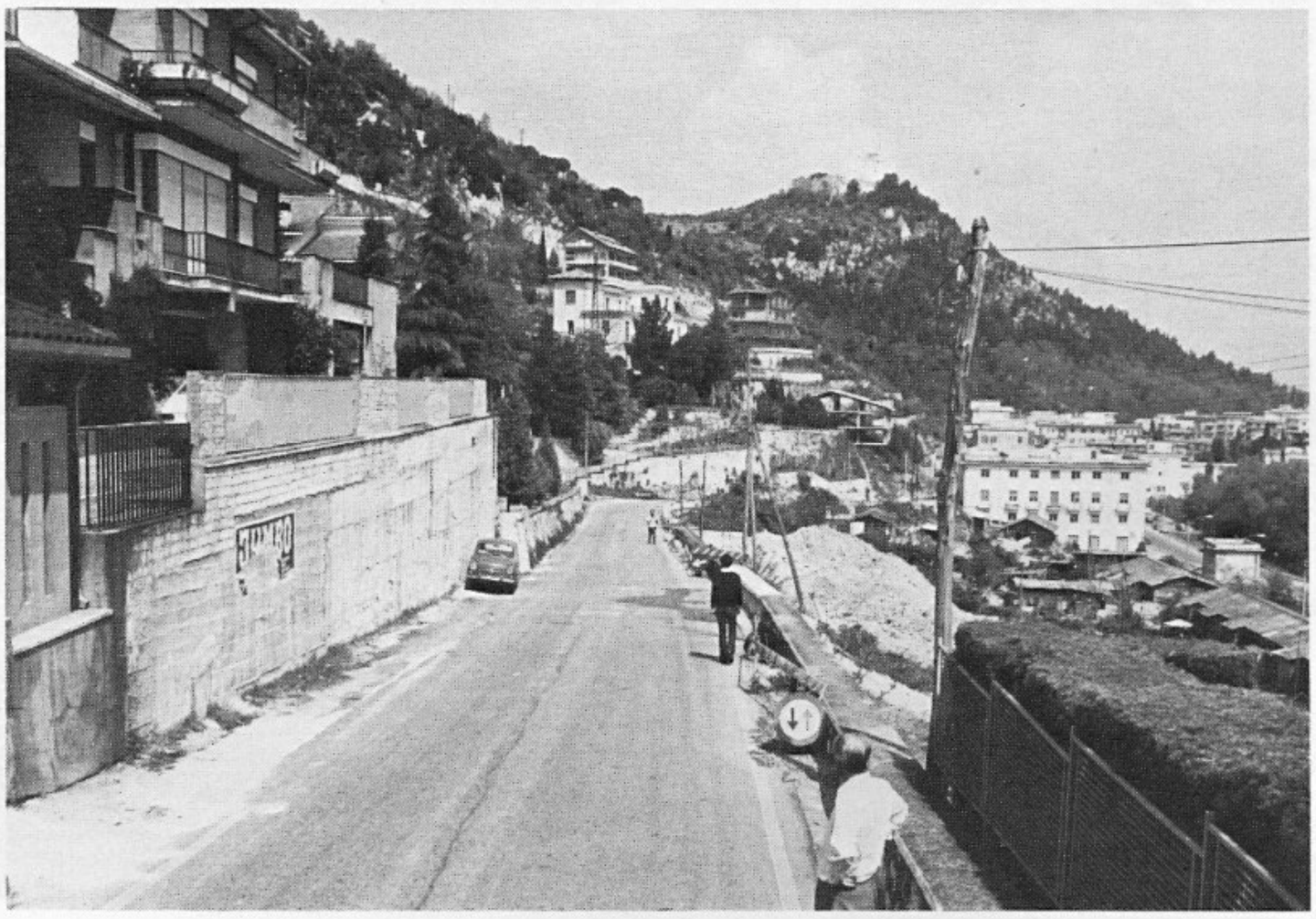
The Eighth Army also had the 1st Canadian Corps (1st Canadian Infantry and 5th Canadian Armoured Divisions) and the 6th South African Armoured Division in reserve to exploit up the Liri valley with the US 36th (Texas) Division in Fifth Army reserve.

Against this very formidable concentration of strength, the Germans had the 44th Infantry Division and the 1st Parachute Division in the Cassino area and a regiment of 15th Panzer Grenadier Division with a regimental group of 305th Infantry Division in the Liri valley. The 71st Infantry Division were in the coastal sector, with three battalions from 44th Division under command, and the 94th Infantry Division in the Aurunci Mountains. The remainder of 15th Panzer Grenadier Division was in reserve near the coast and there were elements of the 90th Panzer Grenadier Division in the German Tenth Army Reserve.

The first days of May 1944 were fine and sunny and the mud of winter had dried to the dust of summer. Dawn on May 11 was overcast and some rain fell but the skies cleared by evening. At 11.00 p.m. precisely, the relative calm was shattered when 1,600 guns opened their artillery counter-battery programme. During the next two hours, all four Allied Corps attacked. The US II Corps on the coast at first made no significant progress but the French Expeditionary Corps soon began to make spectacular gains in the mountains. In the Liri valley, on Eighth Army's 13th Corps' front, the 8th Indian Division had two bridges across the Gari river, south of Sant' Angelo, by 8.00 a.m. on the 12th. However, the 4th British Division, trying to cross the Gari further north, was unable to enlarge its bridgehead and the 28th Brigade, except for two companies, was forced back to the east bank by the evening. General Anders of the 2nd Polish Corps had attacked all the German positions in the Cassino mountains simultaneously with his two divisions, but, although his Polish soldiers succeeded in capturing virtually the whole of Snakeshead Ridge, he decided to withdraw from their very exposed positions during May 12.

The German defenders of the Gustav Line were fighting desperately and with great determination but it was clear that they could not withstand such an overwhelming onslaught for long. By May 15, the French, performing with the greatest gallantry and elan, had captured Monte Maio and Ausonia in the Ausente valley. The German right flank collapsed and the 71st Division was in full retreat towards Esperia. The US II Corps

Above: British Infantrymen near the ruin of the Hotel des Roses (IWM). Below: It is difficult to pinpoint the exact location of many of the pictures taken in Cassino after the final battle. The Hotel des Roses stood in place of the white building on the right.



Left and above: A wounded soldier is carried out of Cassino along Route 6 (towards Mignano), although it doesn't look much like a road (IWM). The superimposition of Castle Hill on the background indicates that this is the same spot today.

drove the 94th Division back westwards along the coast. In the Liri valley, the German defences were penetrated on May 16, and next day the 4th British Division cut Route 6 below Monte Cassino and isolated the town itself. On the same day, the Poles attacked again in the mountains and captured Point 593 at the end of Snakeshead Ridge for the last time. At 10.20 a.m. on the following morning, a patrol of the 12th Podolski Lancers hoisted the Polish eagle over the ruins of the Monastery, now deserted but for a few wounded Germans. The Fourth and last Battle of Cassino was over.

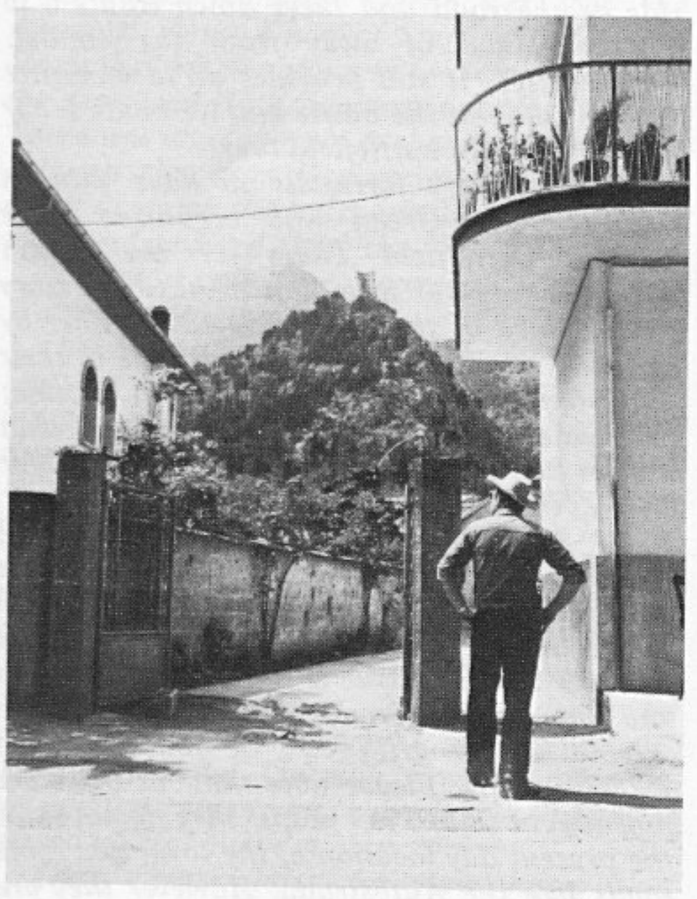
On May 19, 1944, the day after the Polish Lancers raised their flag over the monastery, their commander, Lieutenant-General Wladyslaw Anders, described the battlefield:

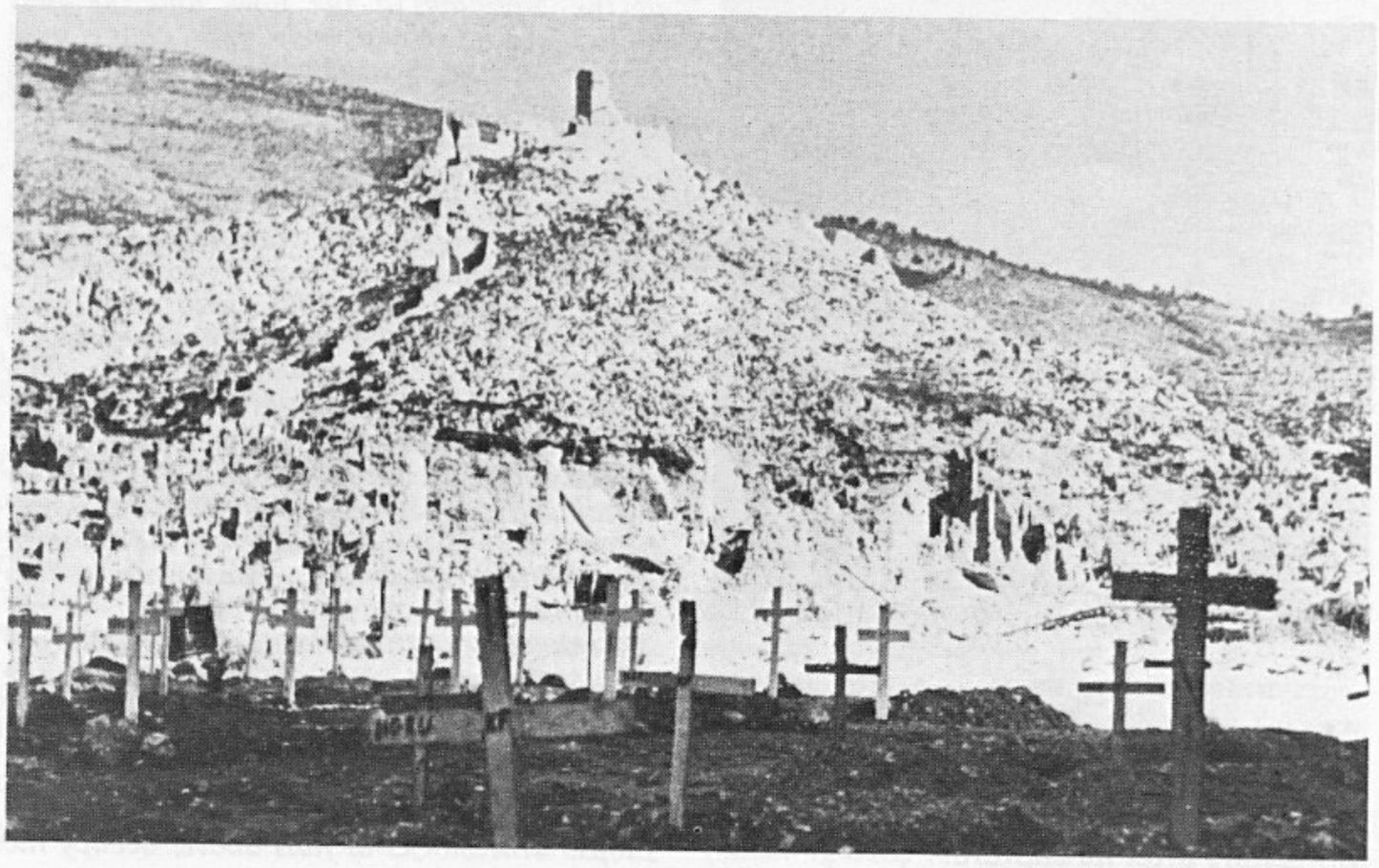
'There were enormous dumps of unused ammunition and here and there heaps of land mines. Corpses of German and Polish soldiers, sometimes entangled in a deathly embrace, lay everywhere, and the air was full of the stench of rotting bodies. There were overturned tanks with broken caterpillars and others standing as if ready for an attack with their guns still pointing towards the monastery. The slopes of the hills, particularly where the fire had been less intense, were covered with poppies in incredible number, their red flowers weirdly appropriate to the scene. All that was left of the oak grove of the so-called Valley of Death were splintered tree-stumps. Crater after crater pitted the sides of the hills and scattered over them fragments of uniforms and tin helmets, tommy guns, Spandaus, Schmeissers and hand-grenades.' Hitler, himself a WWI veteran, said that Cassino was the only battlefield of this war that resembled those of the first.

The opposing forces had, between them, over 50,000 casualties from the five months fighting. With the rugged terrain, it was inevitable that the bodies of some soldiers would never be found and even two years later, malignant malaria still placed Cassino 'out of bounds'. The memorial at the British cemetery alone lists 4,068 missing.

Following British policy of defining smaller cemeteries for each battle, the British War Cemetery at Cassino contains 4,267 burials. In contrast, the German cemetery near Caira Village contains 22,000 burials but these have been concentrated from all over central Italy. The Polish cemetery is laid out on the lower slopes of Point 593 which itself is surmounted by the Polish memorial. It was opened on September 1, 1945, the sixth Anniversary of the German invasion of Poland. Here the thousand Poles that lie buried in stone tombs were joined on May 23, 1970 by General Anders. Still in exile, he had requested that when he died his body was to be taken back to Italy and buried beside those who lost their lives under his command.

Above: An American soldier surveys the ruined town after its capture (US Army). Below left: ETO historian Roger Bell on the same spot in the Via Abruzzi. Below: Not far away was the new Zealand Cemetery, in the town below Castle Hill, now completely built over.





Unfortunately, controversy still continues between the Polish Government in Exile in London and the Communist Government in Poland as to who is responsible for the upkeep of the cemetery, with the result that it has now fallen into disrepair.

The American dead are now buried forty miles away in the large American cemetery at Nettuno. American policy has also led to concentrated 'area' cemeteries and that at Nettuno contains 7,862 dead and a memorial to 3094 missing. Over 14,500 dead from Central Italy have been transferred to cemeteries in the United States. At Venafro, 3,414 Frenchman killed in the Cassino sector now lie in the Military Cemetery.

The destruction of the Abbey on February 15 was the fourth occasion in its history that the Monastery had been destroyed. The Germans had removed most of its art treasures before the battles began, obviously fearful that the fighting would extend to the hilltop. Also removed were the remains of St. Benedict, the Abbey's founder and patron saint.

One of the first to return to the Abbey after the battle was Dom Ildefonso Rea, the Abbot of Cava, who was later to become the 298th successor to St. Benedict as the Bishop and Abbot of the Monastery. He found that even the ruins had been ransacked and souvenir hunters had removed any remnants that had survived the bombing. The Statue of St. Benedict in the courtyard, although decapitated, was not destroyed and it still stands in the rebuilt Abbey, although not in its original position.

The first task for the Abbot and monks was to clear and repair the Via Serpentina, the road to the Monastery, to restore communications with the valley below. With the help of the British, Italian and Polish soldiers, aided by German prisoners-of-war, this was done and then work began clearing the half-a-million cubic yards of rubble. The debris was searched carefully before removal and many sculptures and mosaics were salvaged. Four German graves were found beside the courtyard. The cross on the earliest of the four graves bore the date March 16, 1944. This date therefore would have no relevance in the argument as to the presence of Germans in the Monastery before February 15—the date of its bombing. We know the Germans were in the Monastery after February 15—they had every right to be there!

Two of the German graves found in the Monastery after its capture.

Above: The battle is over; water filled bomb craters, shattered buildings and piles of rubble contrast with the modern, new town (photo below) as seen from Castle Hill.

The foundation stone for the new Abbey was laid on March 15, 1945, the anniversary of the bombing of the town and the first building to be rebuilt was a small chapel over the tomb of St. Benedict. The reconstruction was to follow closely the original plans which had been rescued by German soldiers and taken to Rome for safe-keeping. Notwithstanding the heavy damage that Italy suffered during the war, the Italian Government provided thousands of lire to restore the abbey as soon as possible, with other contributions being made from other countries.

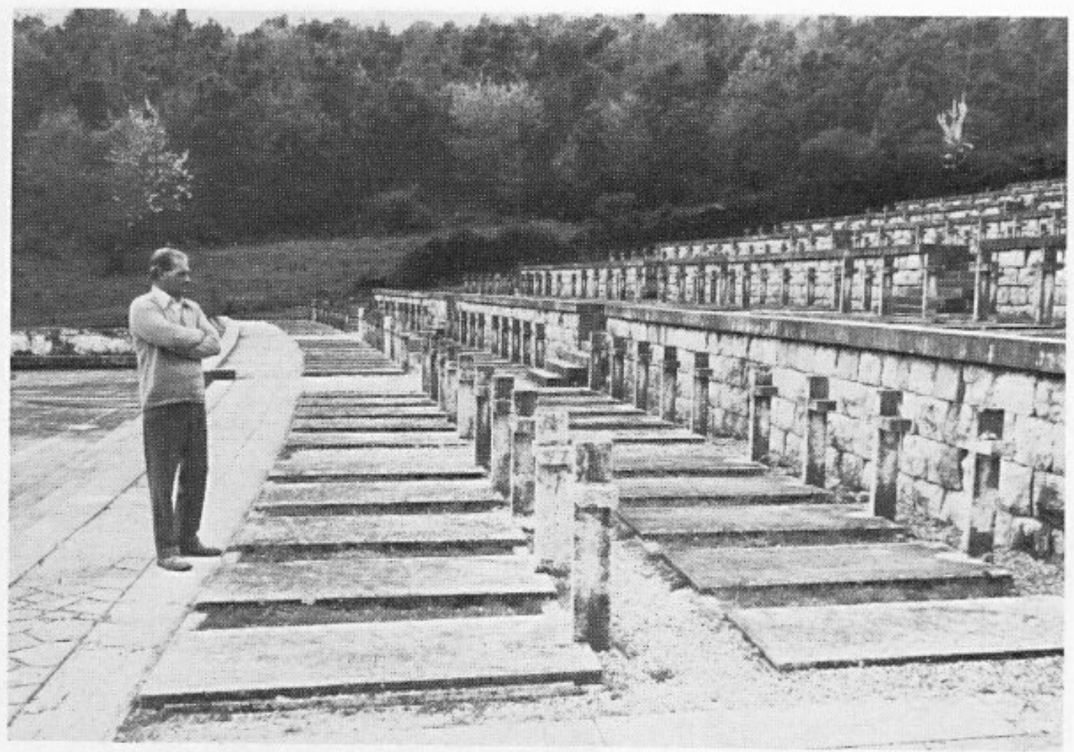
Cassino town, which had been completely destroyed, was rebuilt on the valley floor to the south-east and therefore it may appear, to the casual visitor, that no evidence of the old town remains. However, exploration of the slopes below Castle Hill (where much of the old town was situated) reveals many ruins, walls, cellars and stonework in the undergrowth.

At the base of the hill runs Route 6, the old main road to Rome, now by-passed by the autostrada. Here, the three focal points of German resistance in the old town, the Continental Hotel, Hotel des Roses and the Baron's Palace were not rebuilt. Instead, shops, with blocks of flats above, occupy the sites. The Excelsior Hotel, which replaced the old Continental, now stands on the opposite side of the road and faces down Route 6 to Rome instead of away from the capital. Nevertheless, it still provides an ideal centre for the study of the battle and we made it our HQ for our own battlefield tour.

We were very fortunate to have with us Colonel John Green who organised three Cassino Battlefield Tours for the British Army. It was our intention to base our story on the third of these tours so that, either by studying our panoramic photographs in their own homes or on a personal visit to Cassino, our readers can participate themselves in what was an exclusive training exercise provided for officers in the modern British Army.

An Army Battlefield Tour is based on stands, that is, several carefully-chosen locations from which different aspects of the battle can be seen and studied. The tour as presented in this issue is based on five stands and the map reference for each (using the original Army grid) can be found on the 1:25000 maps. Please note that, as these are reproductions of 1944 maps, they do not show the present day location of the town and some roads like the Autostrada. However they are

The visitor is forcefully reminded of the bitter fighting for Cassino by the rows of graves in the three cemeteries near the town.



The German cemetery, left (beside the road to Caira), the Polish, above, on 593, and, below, the British.

sufficiently accurate to find each stand and, we feel, give more authenticity to a tour made thirty-odd years later.

Once again we have to give a warning over possible uncleared mines and explosives. We came across several unexploded grenades and mortar bombs. As such material still remains on the surface there is no guarantee that all mines have been cleared. Our own policy, in spite of our enthusiasm like every one else for war relics (we did find a rusted British helmet on the Monastery slope), is that the loss of eyes, limbs or even worse is not worth a piece of rusty metal!

The abortive Gari river crossing by the Texas Division (described at Stand I) brought considerable repercussions for the American Fifth Army Commander, General Mark Clark, after the war. The Commander of the 36th Texas Division, General Fred L. Walker objected to a one-division, direct, frontal river crossing against the formidable German fixed defences on the high ground overlooking the Sant'Angelo area, but was over-ruled. After the war he claimed that he tried to convince his superiors that the idea was militarily unsound and a certain disaster but they refused to listen. General Walker had no alternative but to obey orders and the crossing was made with casualties officially given as 1,681.

In January 1946, several hundred 36th Division veterans attended the inaugural meeting of the 36th Division Association at Brownwood, Texas. The meeting passed a resolution calling the Rapido Crossing 'one of the colossal blunders of the Second World War, and called on the US Congress to investigate the matter.

In 1946, General Eisenhower was the American Army Chief of Staff (with General Gruenther his deputy) and General Clark was the American High Commissioner for Austria. There was an elaborate exchange of telegrams between the War Department and General Clark in which the latter justified his action in 1944 and pressed that 'the War Department . . . should put the squeeze on General Walker in a big way'.

The investigation requested by the 36th Division resulted in hearings by the Committee on Military Affairs of the House of Representatives on February 20 and March 18, 1946. A number of former Texas Division officers gave evidence, including General Walker, although he personally had taken no part in the instigation of the Division resolution in Texas. General Clark held the view that the crossing, although costly, had materially helped the Anzio landings by drawing German forces from that sector. With a lack of German evidence, the investigation came to an inconclusive end and it served no real purpose.

Thirty years later we now know that German forces were drawn from the Anzio area, but because of the British 10th Corps attacks on the Garigliano river in the south. General F. von Senger und Etterlin, German XIV Panzer Corps Commander, revealed in his memoirs that, far from causing any alarm or drawing any units to the Rapido area, the 36th Division assault was repulsed by the 15th Panzer Grenadier Division without even calling for reserves.

The 30th Anniversary of the Cassino battles was remembered in Cassino by a gathering of representatives from all the warring nations. The delegates to the Peace Meeting were welcomed on Thursday, May 23, 1974 by the Mayor of Cassino, Antonio Grazio Ferraro, and there followed three days of discussion, wreath layings and informal gatherings culminating with a Commemorative Ceremony in the Abbey the following Sunday. The message behind the Peace Meeting was epitomised with the words of Gabriel Marcel: 'Because the dead cannot speak, history keeps repeating itself'.

Thirty years later, on May 23, 1974, old adversaries shake hands outside Cassino Town Hall—all three fought in the town on March 16-18, 1944. L-R Gefreiter Gunter Rahigor FJR3, Private Jim Richards, 26th NZ Battalion, and Feldwebel Georg Schmitz, FPB I.

The German Attack on the Castle – March 19, 1944

By March 17, the 1/9th Gurkhas were on Hangman's Hill and found themselves reinforced on the night of March 17/18 by two companies of the 4/6th Rajputana Rifles who had taken up supplies and were unable to get back in daylight. The plan was for the 1/4th Essex in the Castle to join the Gurkhas on Hangman's Hill in preparation for a final assault on the Monastery.

Reaching the Castle at five minutes past midnight on March 19, Lieut-Colonel Noble, commanding the Essex, confirmed that the Battalion was to be relieved by the 4/6th Rajputana Rifles forthwith. In the cold, early morning, therefore, the latter began to take over from the Essex at the Castle and the lower hairpin bend (Point 165). By 5.30 a.m., the latter had been completed and in the Castle itself the hand-over of posts was progressing well. B and D Companies of the 1/4th Essex set off on their hazardous climb across the slope towards Hangman's Hill and A and C Companies were just starting to organise themselves to follow in a second wave when the whole area of Castle Hill was suddenly drenched by intense German machine gun fire from both Monte Cassino and Cassino town itself. Heavy shelling and mortaring followed and then over 200 German paratroops of the 1st Battalion, 4th Parachute Regiment, raced down the hillside and engulfed the Rajput defenders of Point 165. Without pause, the momentum of the attack was maintained and the Germans charged on towards the Castle. Inside, the garrison of about 150 men, commanded by Major Ketteley, the Essex A Company Commander, comprised A and C Companies of the Essex, less one platoon, a company of the 4/6th Rajputana Rifles, two platoons of the 1/6th Rajputana Rifles, some Sappers and a gunner officer of the 1st Field Regiment with his observation party, along with six German paratroop prisoners, including a sergeant-major. The garrison hurriedly took up defensive positions and what followed bore a close resemblance to a medieval siege battle.

B and D Companies were on the slope moving towards Hangman's Hill and Colonel Noble ordered them to engage the Germans from the flank but the Brigade Commander decided that they should continue up the mountainside to reinforce the Gurkhas. Meanwhile, the Essex Support Company, on the adjacent crest of Point 175, came to the aid of the beleaguered Castle garrison and their medium machine guns and 3-inch mortars engaged the German attackers, who nevertheless swarmed forward with almost reckless daring, supported by snipers higher up the hillside who kept the heads of the defenders below the battlements. The paratroopers came alarmingly close to the Castle, throwing grenades over the walls into the courtyard, while the garrison swept the approaches with light machine guns, firing through the narrow slits. This fierce action lasted about twenty minutes when the Germans were pinned down and a flare recalled them but, as was anticipated, only long enough to reorganise for a further effort. The defeat of this first counter-attack owed much to the bravery and determination of men like Lieutenant Coghlan, OC No. 14 Platoon, and Corporal Parker, both of whom were killed.

The lull was short-lived and, under cover of smoke, a second German counter-attack was launched. As before, the fighting was close and it was during this action that Major Ketteley was mortally wounded, while passing messages. Major Beckett (now Major-General D. A. Beckett), commanding the Essex C Company, took over command of the garrison. With the utmost bravery and an almost total disregard of casualties, the German paratroopers pressed their assault and attempted, in full view, to clamber up the Castle walls. Once again, heavy defensive fire broke up the attack. But yet again, after a brief pause, the paratroopers renewed their assault, only to be driven back by artillery and mortar fire. While spotting for the latter, Major Beckett was wounded a second time. The incessant sniping was proving particularly troublesome and Major Beckett, during the lull that followed, sent a number of Rajput riflemen outside the Castle to counter it from cover on the hillside.

Inside the Castle, the position was desperately serious; only three officers and sixty men remained to continue the fight. The enormous expenditure of ammunition caused problems, for the machine gunners had fired more than 8,000 rounds and the mortars, whose 'barrels had grown red hot, had curled and bent', over 1,500 bombs. A continuous supply was vital and 'a party of men had run the gauntlet across the ravine to Point 175 and had brought back sandbags of ammunition', while Regimental Serjeant-Major Rose had delivered load after load of bombs to the Support Company's mortar pits.

But there was no respite for the Castle garrison. At about 9.00 a.m., they had to meet a new threat, this time from a different direction. German paratroopers were still occupying that part of Cassino town at the foot of Castle Hill and some of them began to work up the hill towards the lower walls, with Spandau teams concentrating their fire against the gateway. This attack, however, was halted by Essex and Rajput machine guns and mortars from Point 175 and a barrage from New Zealand tanks in the town.

It was now approximately 9.30 a.m. 'Battalion now warned us to expect a third counter-attack', records Major Beckett, 'and asked if we could state whether Point 165 was clear of our own troops. Captain Jenkins (Rajputana Rifles) said he had not been in touch with his men for two hours and would assume they had been overrun (this was in fact the case). Defensive fire was therefore laid on very close in, and as soon as the attack started a full 'blunderbuss' of artillery, mortars, medium machine guns and small arms was brought to bear'. Again, the German attack was held but later, a party of about eight paratroopers succeeded in getting near enough to the northern wall to blow a demolition charge under one of the buttresses.

The wall was breached by the explosion and some of the defenders were buried beneath the rubble. The Germans attempted to get through the gap but met a hail of bullets and were stopped. During this defence of the walls, Major Beckett was wounded for the third time.

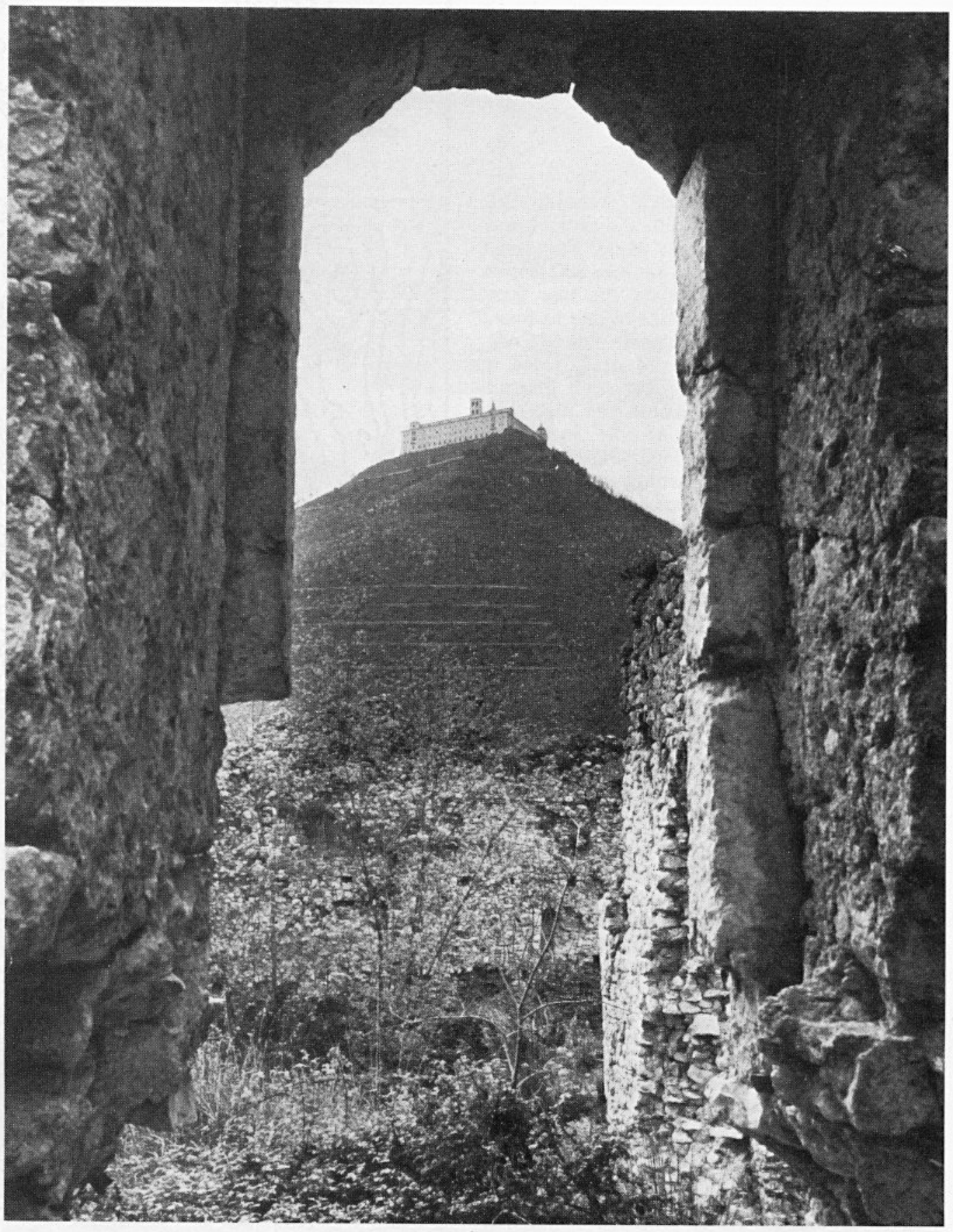
This German attack proved to be the last crisis and, while Point 165 had been lost, the Castle remained in Allied hands. There was another alarm but the Germans were discouraged by defensive fire. The ordeal of the 1/4th Essex was not over, however, for their Commanding Officer, Colonel Noble, was severely wounded during the afternoon while accompanying his General to an observation post.

While the defenders of the Castle had suffered grievously, the German attackers had paid a high price too. A wounded paratrooper who had surrendered thought that of the 200 men involved in the first counter attack only about forty were still fit to fight at the end.

Incidentally, when some men of the Castle garrison were buried under the collapsing northern wall on March 19, it was not the first time. The day before, General Beckett recalls, 'we were shelled by one of our own tanks, I think a New Zealand Division tank directed on to a sniper just in line with the Castle and the walls acted as butts for the 'overs'. I think there were about three or four shells and one or two of these certainly caused part of the west wall to collapse, burying some people including one of my Platoon Commanders, Lieutenant Harvey, who was partially blinded and evacuated.'

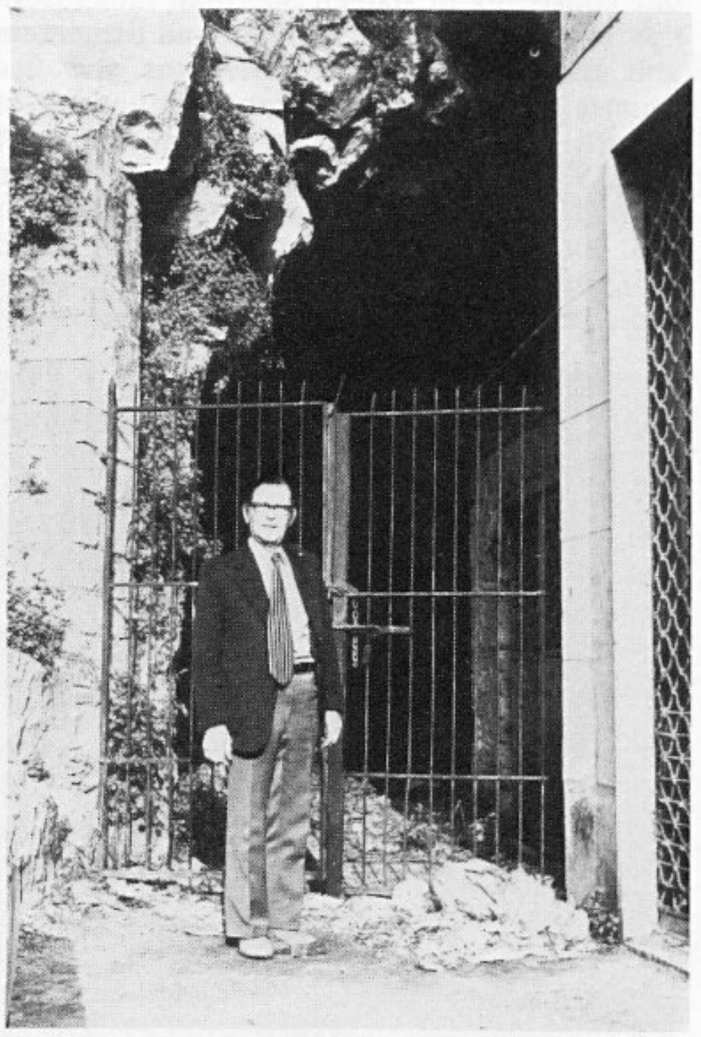
According to Allied historians, the attack on the Castle was part of the Third Battle, but in Germany it is included in the Second. This is because the Allies see the Cassino battles in four distinct phases, since four separate attacks were made on the Gustav Line.

The Castle still stands on Rocca Janicula, Point 193, renamed Castle Hill by the Allies. Similarly Point 435 was renamed Hangman's Hill by the Allies and Galgenberg (literally Gallows Hill) by the Germans. The location of our Battlefield Tour Stand V is nearly on the site of the so-called yellow house, and it was whilst we were parked at this stand that a coach-full of German Fallschirmjager veterans arrived on their own tour. Their leader, Feldwebel Georg Schmitz, introduced himself to our own guide, Colonel John Green (who fought in the Italian Campaign). There were six Germans in the party who had fought at Cassino and they compared notes and reminiscences with the Colonel. Georg Schmitz was in the 1st Parachute Engineer Battalion of the 1st Parachute Division and had been positioned in a cave behind the ruins of the Continental Hotel, still visible today. He carried a camera with him and had taken photographs during the fighting, so the following day we were able to take some unique comparisons of Georg Schmitz—then and now.



Above: The Monastery, framed in the archway of the Castle, dominating Point 193.

At the Castle today, piles of rubble and a liberal sprinkling of German rifle grenades remain to remind the visitor of the fierce fighting. Here and there, unexploded mortar bombs, leaking explosive, make a detailed exploration of the area a hazardous undertaking.



Above left: Feldwebel Georg Schmitz of Fallschirmpionierbatallion 1 pictured in Cassino in April 1944 and again (above right) in April 1976 outside 'his' cave behind the site of the old Continental Hotel.

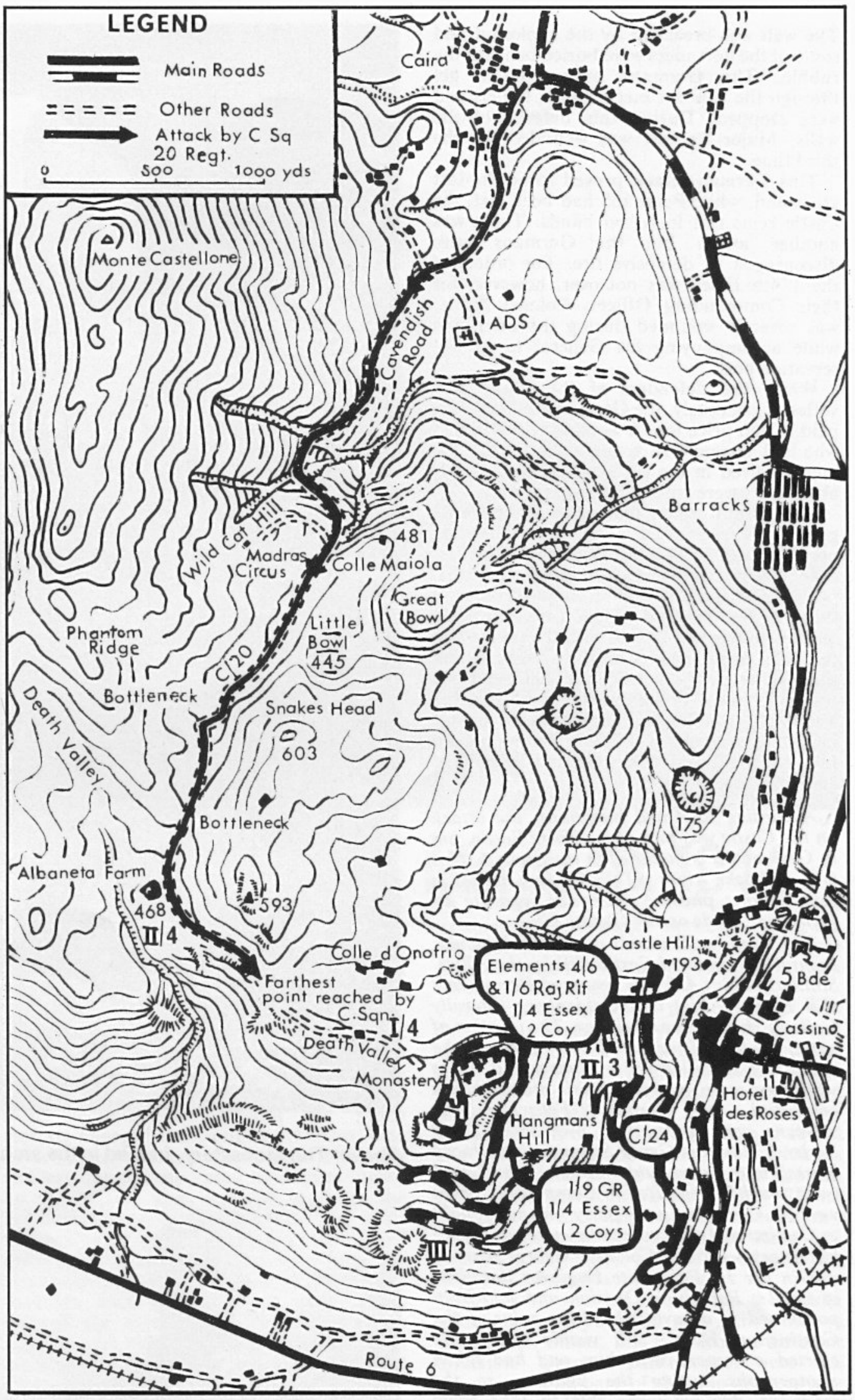
The Cavendish Road Tank Attack

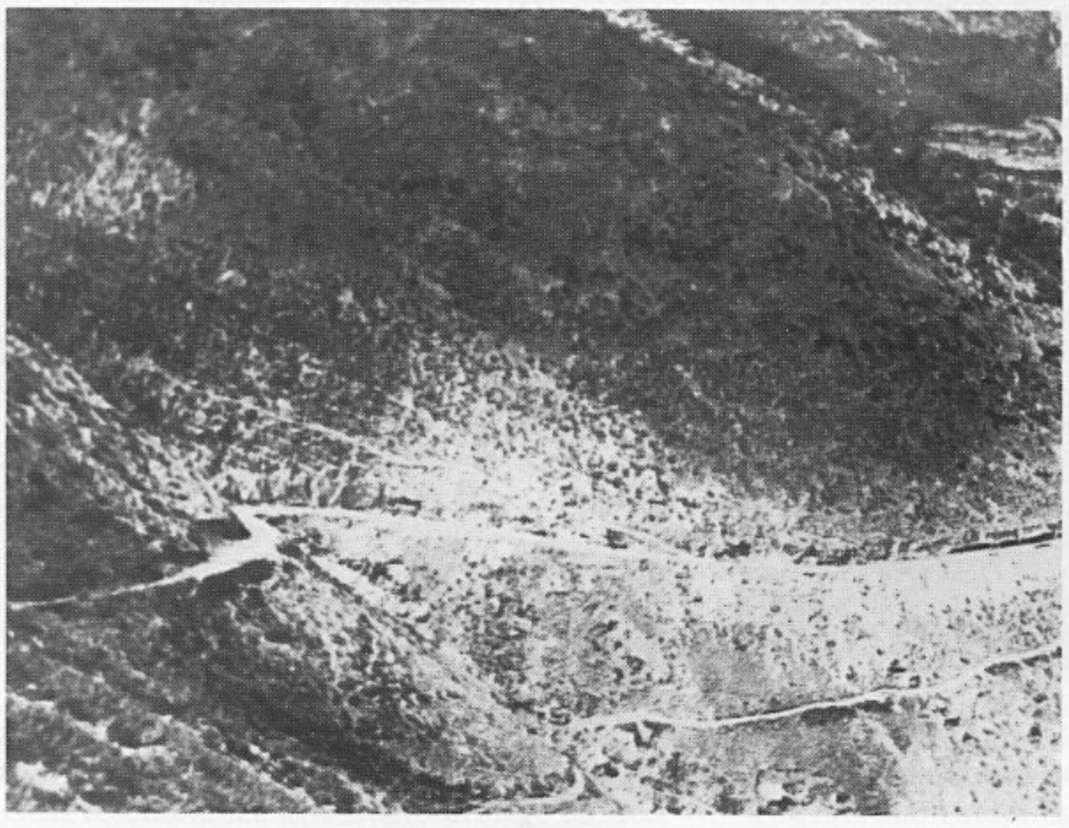
On March 19, while the Essex were fighting so desperately on Castle Hill, the tank thrust along Cavendish Road took place. This road was a steep, winding track that rose 800 feet in a mile and a half, and over the last four hundred yards had a gradient of one in four. On the top of the rise to the north side of Colle Maiola, at a point known as Madras Circus, it came out on to comparatively level ground and ran in a general southerly direction between Phantom Ridge to the west and Snakeshead to the east passing Albaneta Farm to the right and turning to the south-east past Point 593 and round Point 569. The track then ran fairly straight to the north-west corner of the Abbey. To make up for the shortage of mules, Indian engineers had put in continuous hard work during February to make the supply track to 7th Indian Brigade fit for the use of jeeps. Towards the end of February, General Freyberg and his chief engineer, Brigadier Hanson, had revived an earlier idea of using the track as an approach for tanks and a section of the 6th New Zealand Field Company were directed to assist the 4th, 12th and 21st Indian Companies.

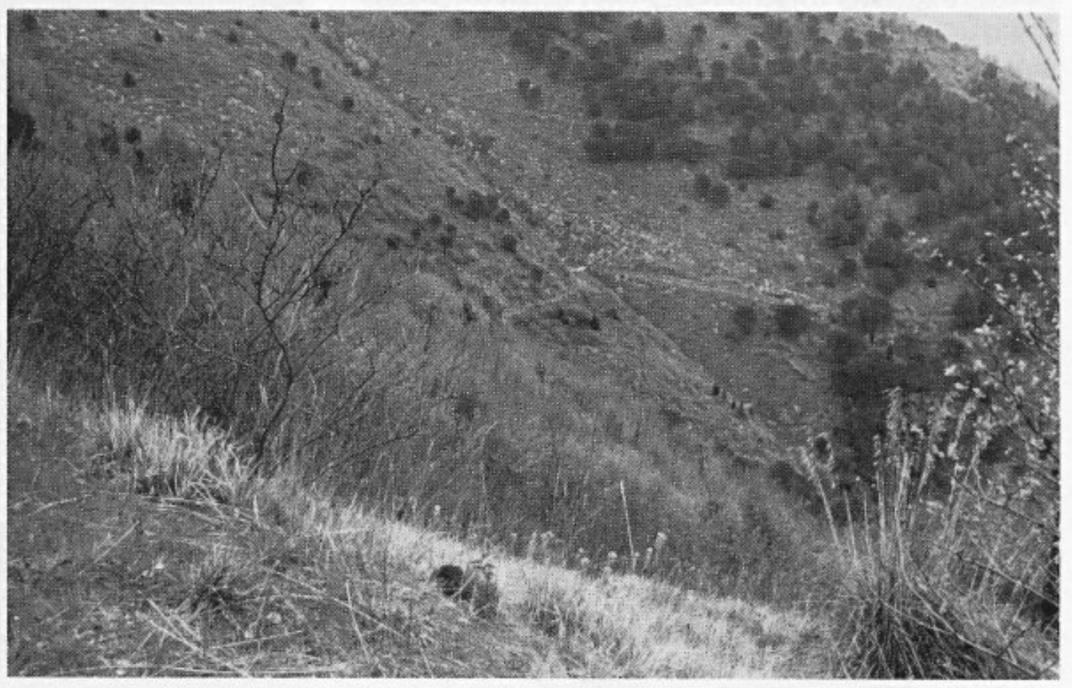
The task consisted of increasing the width from eight feet of cut and fill to twelve feet of solid cut. In addition the top hairpin into Madras Circus had to be strengthened. The units were equipped with two D4 and one D7 bulldozers; two D6 'dozers with Worthington trailer compressors and four Morris compressors.

Work began on March 1 with the compressors reaching the site two days later. The main problems were three sections of solid limestone and several patches of rock outcrop. The solid rock required the efforts of four platoons and five compressors and on March 6 deep blasting began. Approximately 1,700 lbs of explosives were used and within six days, by midday on March 11, the track was suitable for tanks.

The armoured attack over the hills was made by a force under command of 7th Indian Brigade. Lieut-Colonel Adye RA commanded the force, which was to advance in two parts, one consisting of sixteen Sherman tanks from the 20th New Zealand Armoured Regiment and the other of three Shermans and five Stuarts of the Reconnaissance Squadron of the 7th Indian Brigade and sixteen Stuarts of the US 760th Tank Battalion. Major Barton of the NZ Regiment had expressed concern at the total lack of infantry support and represented this to Corps. However, the Indian Brigade had sustained heavy casualties







Left: Cavendish Road in 1944 winding up the mountainside from Caira village (IWM). Above: It is difficult to discern the overgrown track in this photograph but it is there.

from the weeks of fighting and no infantry could be spared. This decision was to have a significant influence on the outcome of the attack.

The tanks began their advance at 6.00 a.m. On the first stage, their main concern was the going. The road was negotiable but some tanks lost their tracks. However, by 9.00 a.m. the leading Shermans had reached Albaneta Farm, lying in the valley between Points 575 and 593 and had subdued German fire from both.

General Galloway had not given up hope at this stage of the assault on the Monastery by the 1/9th Gurkhas but the outcome of the engagement on Castle Hill was still obscure and it seemed as if the tank attack would go in before any infantry could move off from Hangman's Hill.

Bursting through between Albaneta Farm and the rocky, western slope of Point 593, some of the Shermans made their way round the southern end of Snakeshead ridge near Point 569. On their right, below, lay the Liri valley and in full view, in front, was the Monastery, only about 1,000 metres away.

The sudden appearance of tanks in such country had taken the Germans completely by surprise but by this time they had recovered sufficiently to do something about it, as Colonel Rudolf Bohmler graphically describes in his book *Monte Cassino:* 'A report had reached the battle headquarters of the 2nd Battalion, 4 Parachute Regiment, of an enemy tank said to be approaching Massa Albaneta. The news was received with astounded incredulity, particularly at Regimental headquarters, where it was regarded as a feeble joke. No one thought it possible for enemy armour to have penetrated into the steep, rugged, mountain country. But Major Grassmehl, who was officiating in command, knowing that all sorts of improbable things occur in war, sent Lieutenant Eckel, commanding the anti-tank company, to investigate.

'Three of the tanks now turned in the direction of the monastery. On that course, Eckel rightly foresaw, they would be confined to a narrow hill path, the steep sides of which precluded any possibility of deviation. Eckel set off in pursuit. He had no short-range anti-tank weapon, but he hoped he might be able to lob a hand grenade into an open turret. But when his party were close to Albaneta, they found, quite by accident, three T-mines. That was indeed a find, and it did not take Eckel long to make up his mind how to use them. Hastening forward at their best speed on the flank of the tanks, the little party managed to get sufficiently ahead to enable them to plant the mines in the hill path.

'Suddenly an ear-splitting explosion rent the air and a black cloud enveloped the tank. Eckel leapt to his feet with a yell of triumph. The trap had closed. The tracks of the leading tank had been blown to pieces, leaving it incapable of movement and blocking the way, for the other two could now neither go forward towards the monastery nor back, since to reverse along the very narrow path was all but impossible.

'Eckel now had nothing left with which to continue the fight; but he knew that at battalion headquarters there was a dump of explosives. He dashed off at once, being hit on the way by a shell splinter . . .

'Breathless, he reached his destination, grabbed a few T-mines, some detonators and a length of fuse and ran back to give his booty the coup de grace. With great skill he stalked his way nearer and nearer to the prey. To leap on its back, tear open the turret and drop an already primed mine into the interior was the work of a moment. He leapt off and dived for cover, closely followed by two terror-stricken members of the tank's crew. Then, with a sharp crack the tank burst asunder. The mine had blown it to pieces.

'Eckel's exploit was too much for the

Above: This is the beginning of Cavendish Road near Caira village. At first it looked as if we could drive up but parts of the track have now crumbled away.

Above: Halfway up on a fairly steep but well-preserved section; probably looking almost as it did thirty years previously.

Above: At the top, the track opens out into a large meadow—'Madras Circus' (see map). From here a surfaced road now leads parallel with Snakeshead ridge to Albaneta farm and the Monastery.

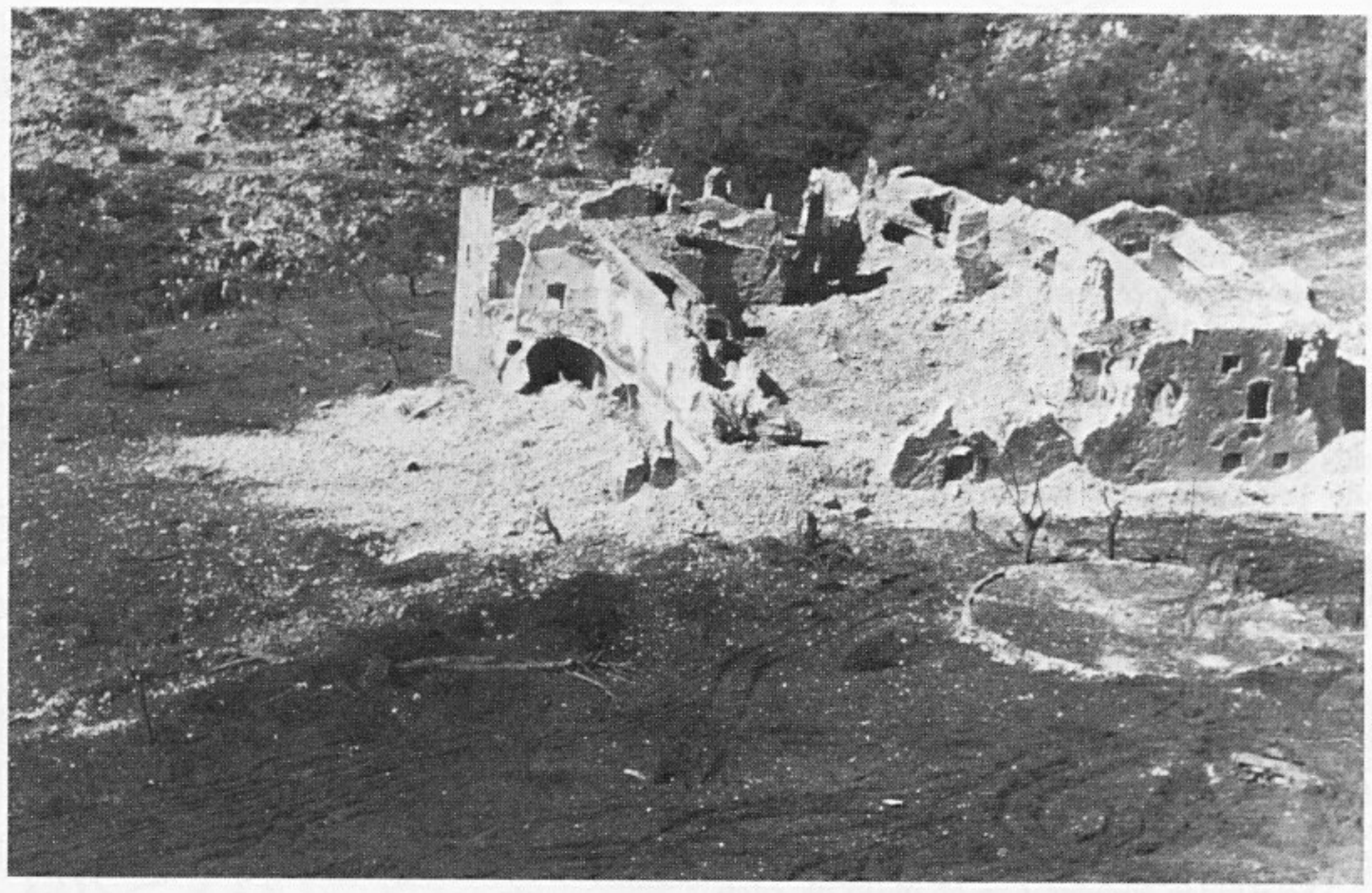
watching paratroops above. The fever of the chase gripped them and they, too, wanted to be 'in on it'. Two of them, Wielun and Sack, managed to find some T-mines, worth their weight in gold at that moment, and rushed boldly at the other tanks and put two of them out of action exactly as Eckel had done. Hufnagel and Gudd accounted for one more apiece.'

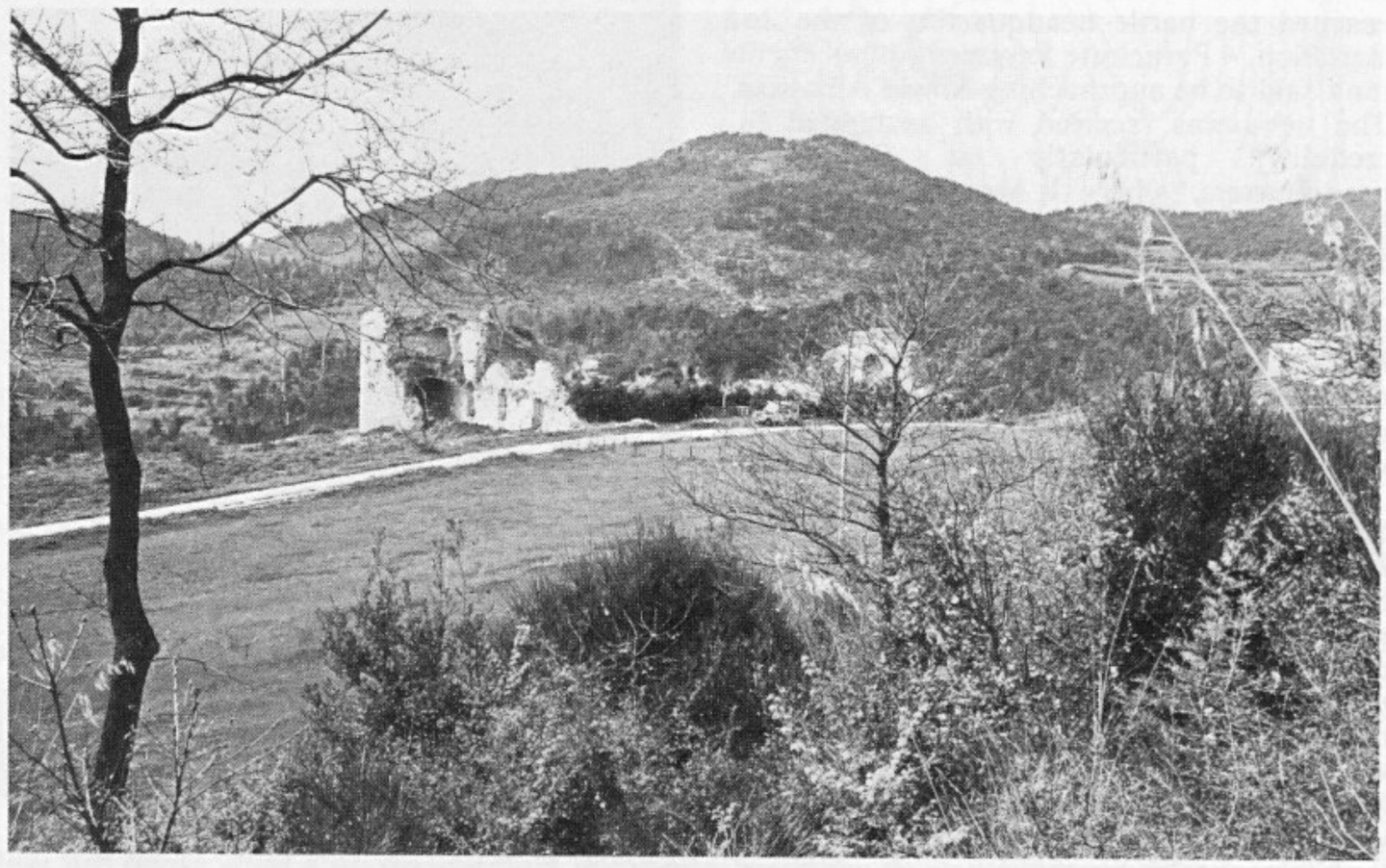
The tank force found it impossible to deploy from the narrow track and it was apparent that without the supporting infantry (requested by Major Barton) to attack German infantry, the tanks could not advance further. The German paratroopers in their dugouts and sangars on the hillsides above were virtually invulnerable to the tanks. The order for withdrawal was given at 5.30 p.m.

Three Shermans and three Stuarts had been destroyed and nine Shermans and seven Stuarts damaged, eleven of which were recovered later. The New Zealanders had lost fourteen men killed or wounded.

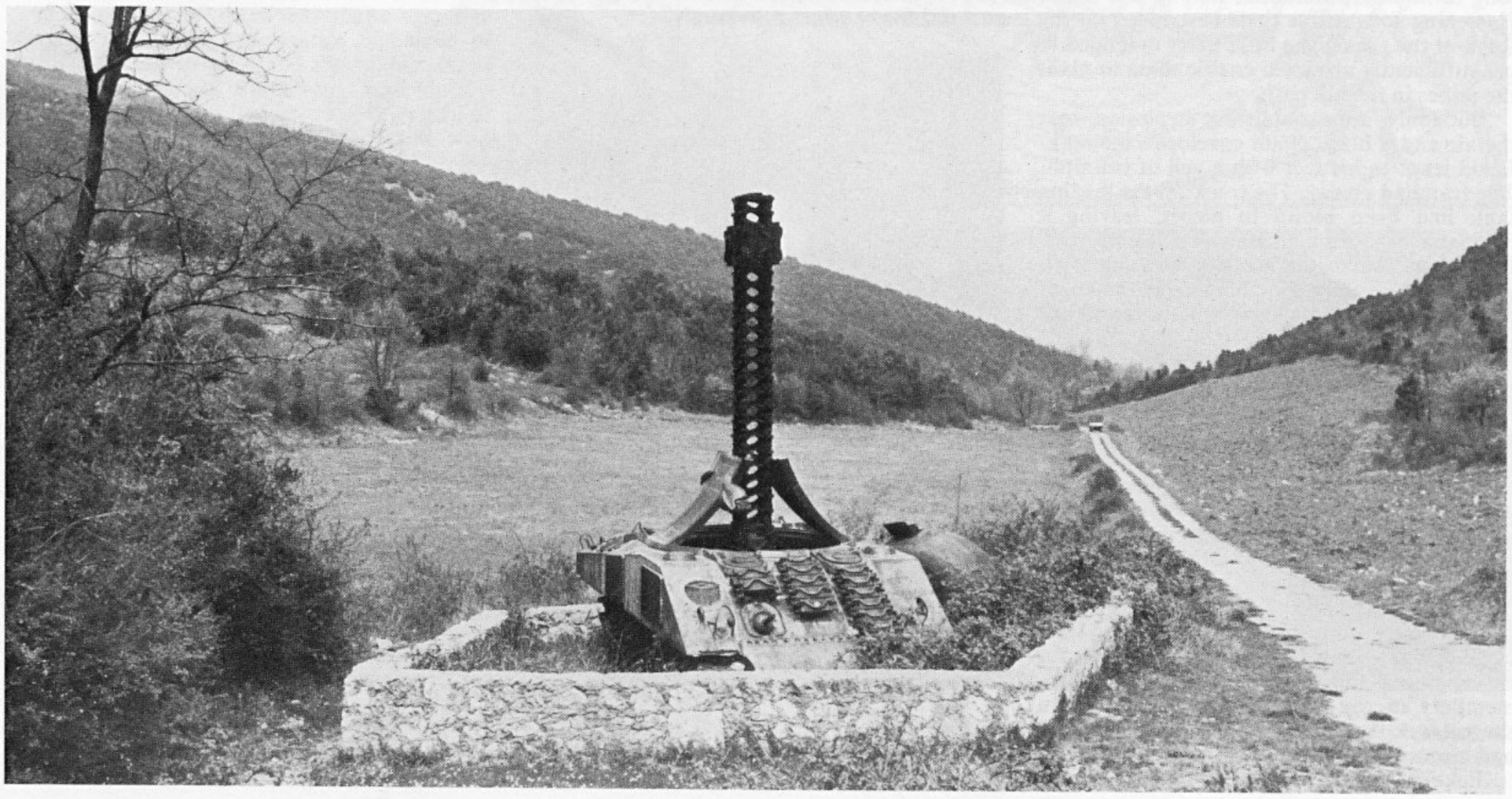
Cavendish Road has always held a fascination for the editor although not all members of our own party were enthusiastic to explore it today! As it had been widened for tanks, we thought it might be possible to drive up it in our Land-Rover; however a local farmer told us that it has collapsed in parts and no vehicle could get up it today. Four of us, therefore, set out to walk up it to be met at Albaneta Farm by the vehicle.

The snows and rains of thirty years have eroded parts of the track and odd rock falls have narrowed it in places. However it is to the great credit of the engineers in 1944 that parts would be perfectly negotiable by a jeep today. A good forty-five minute walk, almost a climb in places, along the winding track brings one to the old Madras Circus, now a large meadow with grazing cows. From the far side of Madras Circus, protected from view by the Point 575 ridge on the right and Snakeshead on the left, a gravel track leads to Albaneta Farm. At the spot where the track passes through 'the Bottleneck', aptly named, one of the Sherman tanks knocked out in the March 19 attack has been left as a Polish memorial. It seems to have struck a mine for the tracks had been blown off and the body holed underneath. Cavendish Road remains today a fascinating feature of the Cassino Battles, almost a memorial to the Indian and New Zealand troops who laboured on its construction.

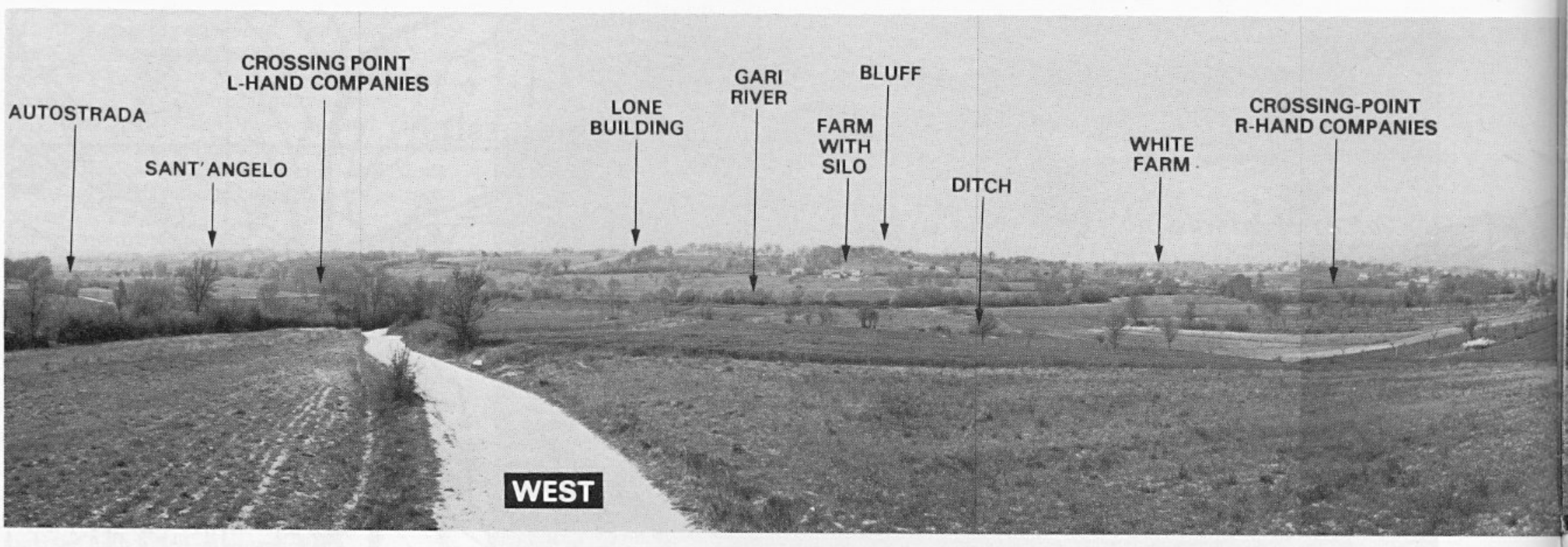




Above: Albaneta Farm photographed by the Germans from Hill 593. A knocked-out Sherman can be seen in the right foreground (Bundesarchiv). Below: Because of dense, impassable undergrowth on 593 today, this is the best comparison we could take of the farm today. Bottom: The Polish Sherman memorial beside the track to Cavendish Road.



CASSINO
BATTLEFIELD TOUR



STAND I

Gari River (Rapido)
Grid Reference 870168

DIRECTIONS TO STAND

From Excelsior Hotel, Route 6 to the south through centre of Cassino. Over the Rapido river bridge, take right turn 350 metres after Kilo stone 140. Continue down this secondary road for just over three kilometres and turn right down the track immediately before the track leading to the hamlet of La Pieta. The Stand is about 500 metres down the track.

ORIENTATION (Panorama 200 degrees)

Stand I is 2½ miles south of CASSINO, along the east bank of the River GARI, which is about 400 metres in front of you.

To the left of the panorama, you can see the autostrada and of course you should try to forget this, since it was built after the war. However, if you look above it you can see the village of SANT'ANGELO which lies on the west or far bank of the river. Above the village are the AURUNCI mountains, unfortunately not visible in the photograph. To the right of SANT'ANGELO you are looking due west up the LIRI valley. The LIRI river lies to the left, on the side of the valley at the foot of the AURUNCI. MONTE CASSINO and the MONASTERY are in the centre of the photograph, to the north-west. Behind, but not visible, is the 5,000 ft MONTE CAIRO. Below the MONASTERY is the new CASSINO town but it is worth remembering that in 1944 the town lay further away to the right below CASTLE HILL. To the right of CASSINO town lies the RAPIDO valley, running almost due north to the villages of CAIRA and SANT 'ELIA. Looking back up the track on the right of the panorama, you can see MONTE TROCCHIO and why over a hundred allied observation posts were established on it.

The track on the left and right of the panorama (which is of course one and the same) was used in 1944 by American and British formations in the First and Fourth Battles respectively, in crossing and bridging the GARI. At the time of the first battle, this low-lying ground on both sides of the GARI was very wet and boggy. It was also mined. Both banks of the river were intersected by numerous ditches up to two feet wide and deep. There were also streams and one particular one, varying from four to six feet in width and some two to three feet deep, ran about twenty metres this side of the river and parallel to it, along the whole of this front. It is still there. In this area the river was about fifty to sixty feet wide, and in spate about nine feet deep. Its widest points were at the loops of the bends and it had in January 1944 an eight miles an hour current. The river banks were mainly vertical and from five to ten feet high.

GERMAN POSITIONS

In January 1944, the far, west bank was held by the 1st and part of the 2nd Battalions of the German 15th PANZER GRENADIER DIVISION. In addition to infantry, well dug-in between the river and the forty foot high bluff you can see on the skyline of the panorama, there were five machine gun posts in a line about half a mile long, about 400-500 metres from the river, between the WHITE FARM by the river bend, through the FARM with SILO TOWER on through the LONE BUILDING to the new cutting of the autostrada. Behind were four self-propelled guns in a line along the top of the BLUFF, generally inside the farm buildings on or near the crest. There was a fifth self-propelled gun to the right of SANT 'ANGELO immediately above the cutting. The German artillery, consisting of the 33rd Artillery Regiment and the 115th Assault Gun Battalion, was mainly well back beyond the BLUFF.

BACKGROUND

As you will recall from the Introduction, the outline plan in the First Battle of CASSINO was for the French to attack in the mountains to the north beyond the RAPIDO valley and then for the 10th BRITISH CORPS to attack on January 17 across the GARIGLIANO, some 10 miles to the left of the panorama. Here, the punch in the middle was to be delivered by the US 36th Texas Division at the very entrance to the LIRI VALLEY, to allow Combat Command B of the US 1st Armoured Division to pass through.

The American plan was an attack across the GARI on a two-Brigade front. There were three Regimental Combat Teams, each equivalent to a British Brigade, in each US Infantry Division.

The two American formations chosen for this task were the 141 and 143 RCTs, the former attacking north (to the right) of SANT' ANGELO and the latter south of the village. Here, we are looking over the northernmost crossing points, those of 141 RCT.

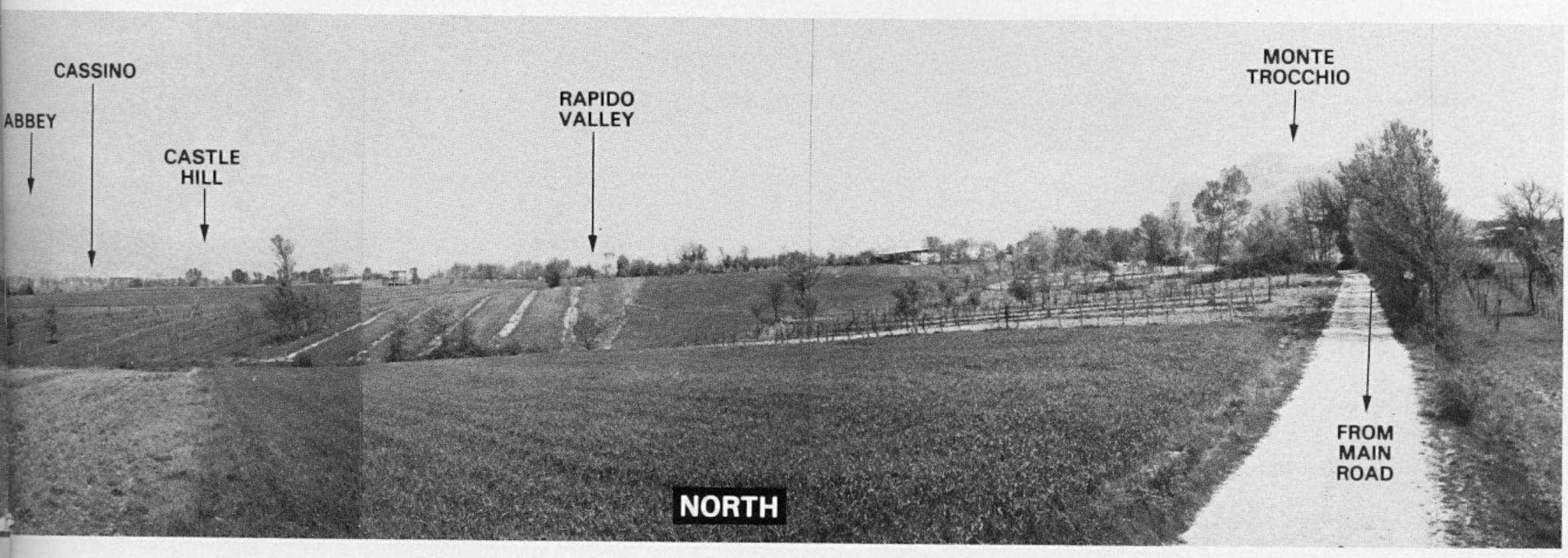
The plan of 141 RCT was for the 1st Battalion, with three Rifle Companies abreast, to cross in boats and, as the supporting engineers started to build four footbridges across the river, the 3rd Battalion was to cross, at first in boats and then, as the footbridges were completed, on foot.

The 1st Battalion's right-hand Companies' crossing point was at the near loop of the river shown in the panorama. The left-hand Companies' crossing point was at the end of the track, on the left 400 metres away. The centre Companies' crossing place was in between.

NARRATIVE

We shall now concentrate upon the events here on the 141 RCT front. The attack was scheduled for 8.00 p.m. on the night of January 20, 1944. The 141 RCT objectives were 1200 metres in front of you and out of sight beyond the BLUFF. The 1st Battalion began to move about 6.00 p.m. from its assembly area behind MONTE TROCCHIO in thick fog to the boat dumps at the foot of and behind the feature. Reaching the place

One of the many OPs still remaining on Monte Trocchio overlooking the Rapido.



where the boats were, the men of the 1st Battalion found that several of the inflatable rubber boats had been damaged or completely destroyed by German Artillery. Picking up usable craft, the first troops began moving towards the river at about 7.00 p.m.

At 7.30 p.m., sixteen battalions of American 105 and 155 mm guns and 4.2 inch mortars opened fire on the area just beyond the river line. Several minutes after this barrage started and, of course, long before any of the men of the Battalion had reached the river, German shells began to fall in the area between the river in front of you and the road at the end of the track shown on the right of the panorama. As the American riflemen walked towards the river carrying their boats and footbridges, shells fell among them, causing 30 casualties in B Company alone. The men scattered for cover. As they left the safety of the marked lanes through the minefield, they stumbled forward and more casualties were caused and more boats damaged by exploding mines. It was difficult, in the darkness and fog, to see the tapes that marked the swept lanes; in any case some of them had been destroyed by shell and mortar fire or trampled into the mud. Realising that his troops would still be on their way to the crossing sites and not ready to cross by 8.00 p.m., Colonel Wyatt, the 141 RCT Commander, requested the artillery to continue firing on the preliminary targets. The original artillery fire plan had been close-in fire support from the river line to 500 metres west of the river and then 100-metre shifts on a prearranged time schedule designed to keep fire falling within 150 to 200 metres of the advancing troops.

Dense fog now added its hazard to one of the most difficult operations of war — an assault river crossing. Just before 9.00 p.m., the first assault troops, carrying their boats, arrived at the river bank 400 metres in front of you and began to paddle across. But now, other calamities occurred. Boats with holes were placed in the water and went down quickly, sometimes carrying men loaded with heavy combat equipment. Other boats sank or capsized because they were poorly paddled. Some boats in perfectly good condition drifted away, abandoned by men seeking shelter from the heavy shell fire. However, in spite of the intense German artillery, mortar and machine gun fire, rather less than a 100 men got across, dug in and took cover, waiting for more to get across.

Behind them, the supporting engineers were to set up four footbridges, improvised from sections of catwalk laid on pneumatic boats, to allow the rest of the 1st Battalion and the 3rd Battalion to get over. One footbridge had been destroyed by mines while being carried to the river, and another was found at the river bank to be defective. Two others were badly damaged by German artillery as they were being put into place. However, using parts of the bridges at hand, the engineers, under fire, managed eventually by 4.00 a.m. to put up a single structure. Although it was soon made slippery by mud and water, the remainder of A and B Companies and one Platoon of C Company managed to get over by about 6.30 a.m. No troops, however, from the 3rd Battalion got across. Before daybreak, Brigadier-General Wilbur, the assistant Divisional Commander, who was at the site, ordered the 3rd Battalion and the remainder of the 1st Battalion to withdraw to their assembly areas and also sent a messenger over to the west bank with instructions to hold on. But, either just before or just after Wilbur sent this message, Colonel Wyatt, the 141 RCT Commander, reasonably sure that the two Companies on the west bank would not be able to hold out in daylight, sent his own messenger to order them to return. However, only a few were able to get back. The remaining riflemen were mostly dug in near the water's edge but, by daylight on the 21st, elements had managed to push on as far as a line about two hundred metres beyond the river. Shortly after day-break, German shells cut the telephone wires linking those on the west bank with Battalion HQs on this side. All radios had by this time been lost or damaged and the noise of American rifles and machine guns gave the only indication of progress beyond the river.

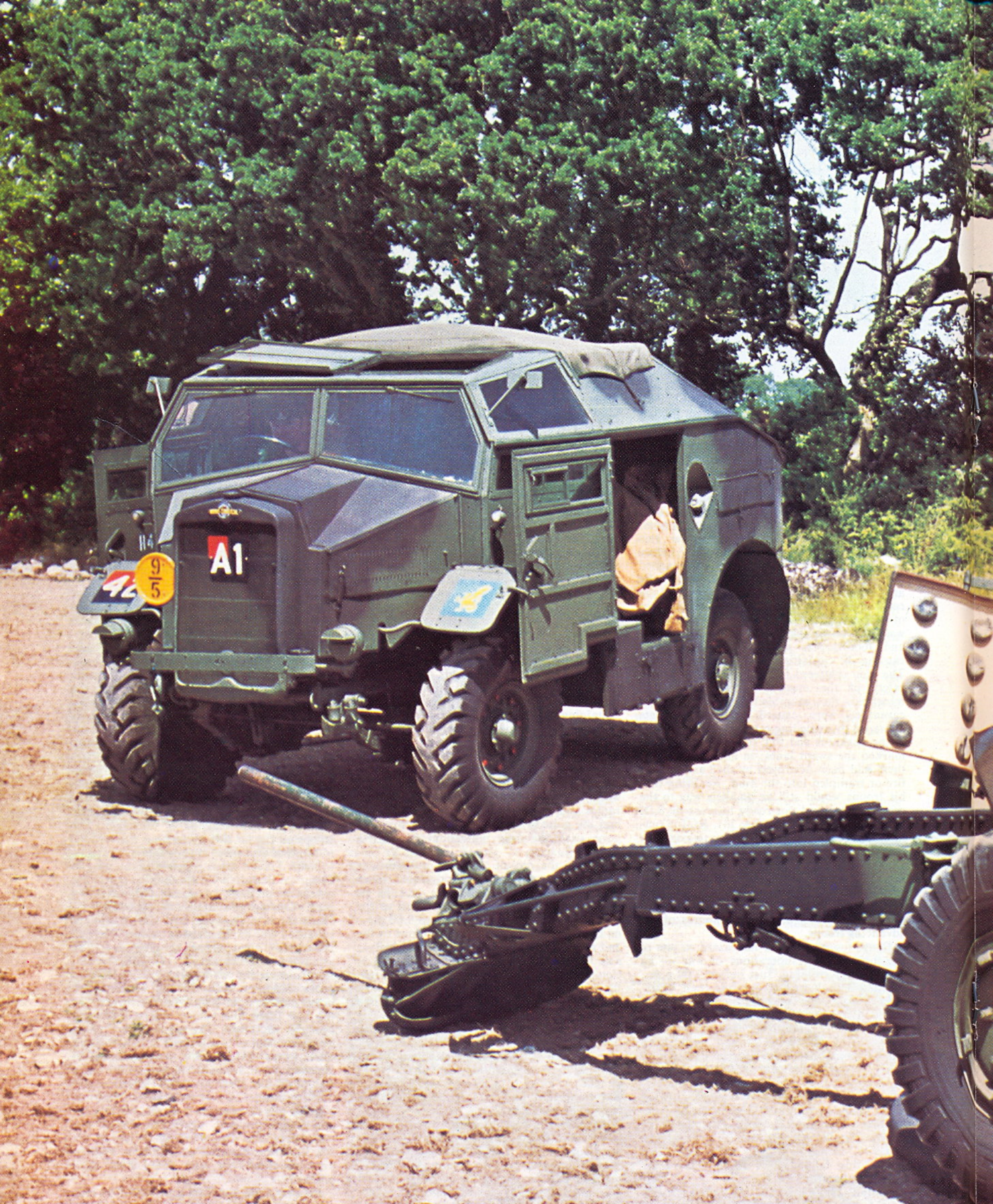
During the day of the 21st, preparations were made to reinforce the bridgehead. More boats and bridging equipment had to be brought forward to replace the losses of the previous night and it was not until 9.00 p.m. on the 21st that the attack was resumed by the 2nd and 3rd Battalions. The crossing schedule was for the 2nd Battalion (less HQ and H Companies) to be ready to cross at the same three crossing points at 9.00 p.m., hand-carrying rubber and assault boats to the crossing sites, and for 3rd Battalion (less HQ and M Companies) hand-carrying footbridge pontoon sections to be ready by 10.00 p.m. The balance of these two Battalions, hand-carrying footbridge pontoon sections, were to be ready to cross at 11.30 p.m. and midnight. Three anti-tank platoons were also to be ready to cross by midnight.

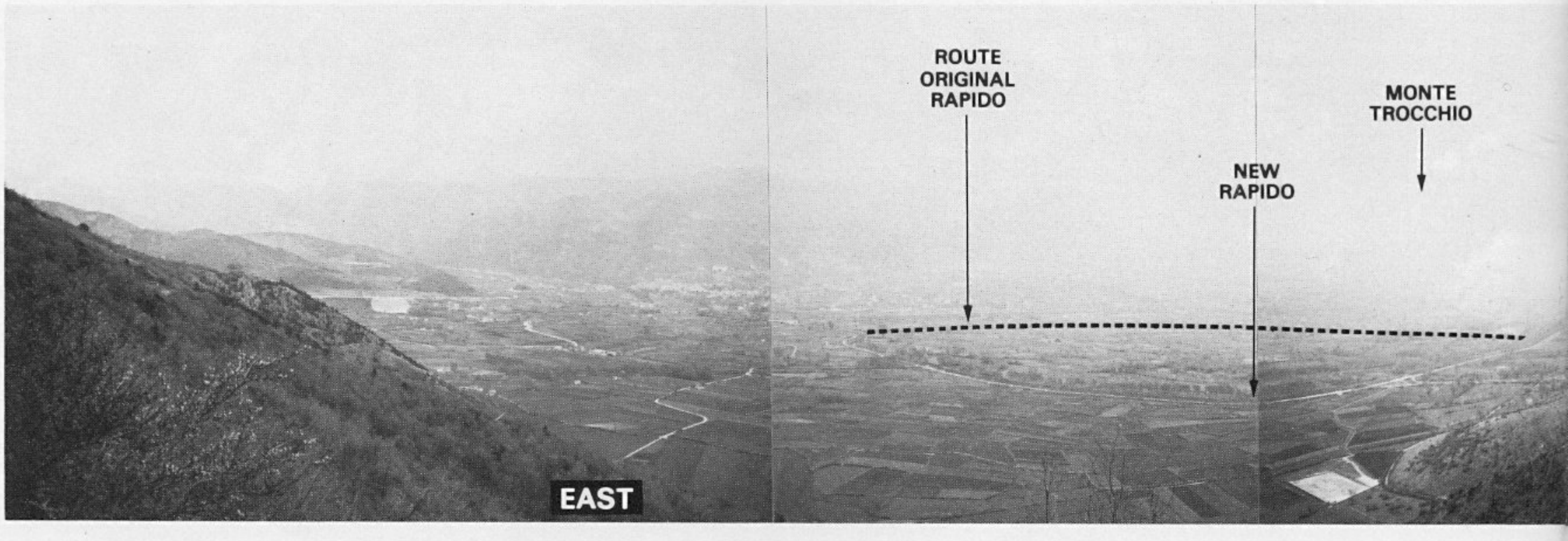
The attack began on time but the infantrymen of the 2nd Battalion found, on reaching the river, that most of the boats had become defective because of German rifle and machine gun fire. Using the undamaged craft they had, about 60 men managed to paddle across and gain the west bank. It took these men some five hours of patient manoeuvre to eliminate the German riflemen and machine gunners firing on the crossing sites. With the near bank no longer swept by hostile bullets, but under fairly heavy shell fire, engineers managed to put in two improvised footbridges by about 2.30 a.m. on the 22nd. The most southerly one on this front was just in front of you. By 3.34 a.m., K and L Companies of the 3rd Battalion were across and an hour later E Company and most of F Company of the 2nd Battalion were on the west bank. By 6.15 a.m., the 2nd Battalion had three Companies and one Platoon of another and the 3rd Battalion its three rifle Companies across. Half an hour later, only one of the footbridges remained, although the Bailey Bridge materials were at the bridge site by 4.25 a.m. and the engineers started work on it some 20 minutes later.

By daylight, the 2nd Battalion had two Companies and one Platoon and the 3rd Battalion two Companies and part of another 100 metres East, i.e. on this side, of a wire fence in front of enemy machine gun positions. The remainder of the third Company of 3rd Battalion and both Battalion HQs were some 400 metres behind, near the far river bank. These men found no surviving Americans who had reached the far bank on the previous night.

Although the Germans near the crossing points had been eliminated, artillery, mortars and machine-guns continued to cause casualties among the Americans. At 8.25 a.m., the building of the Bailey bridge was suspended because of heavy mortar fire. Operations had reached a stalemate. The troops on the far side of the river were unable to advance and those on this side were unable to help. Smoke screens generated by the 2nd Chemical Battalion were unable to defeat the carefully prepared German defensive fire plan. During the afternoon, the German effort against the 2nd and 3rd Battalions increased and the frustrating balance that had been established began to give way. The situation deteriorated. Gradually all telephone wires were destroyed and then radios began to fade. By 4.00 p.m., all the boats and bridges had been destroyed. The fog had lifted and enemy observed fire was brought to bear. The first really strong German counter attack came in at about this time. It was defeated but with considerable expenditure of ammunition and no re-supply was available. The American situation was disintegrating. A second heavy German counter attack came in just after 5.00 p.m. and made progress against obviously less resistance. The Commanding Officer of the 3rd Battalion reported at 5.45 p.m. that he did not think his men could hold their positions.

Between 6.00 and 7.00 p.m. about 40 men returned to this near bank after swimming across the river or paddling across while holding on to logs or pieces of debris. By 7.00 p.m., the 2nd and 3rd Battalions had been overwhelmed and after 8.00 p.m. no more fire from American weapons was heard. Stragglers drifted in and were still drifting in at 11.10 p.m.


A1



STAND II

Terelle Road, Hairpin
Grid Reference 851269

DIRECTIONS TO STAND

From Excelsior Hotel, Route 6 as far as second traffic lights. Turn left and follow signs to the German Cemetery (Cimitero Tedesco) and Caira village. Travel along the Caira road, alongside the Rapido river, through the Barrack area. On entering Caira village, turn sharp right up the Terelle road. Stand is at the third left-hand hairpin bend.

ORIENTATION (Panorama 170 degrees)

This is the back door approach to CASSINO from the north. On the left of the panorama, you are looking east at a height of about 300 metres across the northern end of the RAPIDO valley.

You can see the 'new' RAPIDO river, channelled into a cut lined with concrete. The position of the river as it was in 1944 is indicated on the photograph. In the middle is the German cemetery and the village to the right of it is CAIRA. The hill above the village and slightly left is POINT 213 and at three o'clock from this and a little further away is POINT 156, which from here obscures the BARRACKS area. Above CAIRA village on the skyline, you can see MONTE CASSINO and the MONASTERY. Above the road from CAIRA on the right is MONTE CASTELLONE.

MONTE CAIRO is off the photograph to the right and COLLE ABATE and COLLE BELVEDERE are both behind the Stand.

BACKGROUND

Following the failure, of the US 36th Texas Division to secure a bridgehead over the GARI it was decided to use the US 34th Division in an attack across the RAPIDO.

General Ryder, GOC US 34th Division, ordered 133 RCT to secure the area of the Barracks, which lay immediately behind POINT 156 and the site of which one passes through to reach this Stand. The plan was for the 1st Battalion of 133 RCT to attack across the RAPIDO at the northern end of the Barracks (i.e. the end nearest us here) and for the 3rd Battalion to attack at the southern end. The 100th Battalion of 133 RCT was then to cross and turn south on Caruso Road leading directly to CASSINO TOWN. This is the road from CASSINO to CAIRA. Part of it runs round the left base of POINT 156.

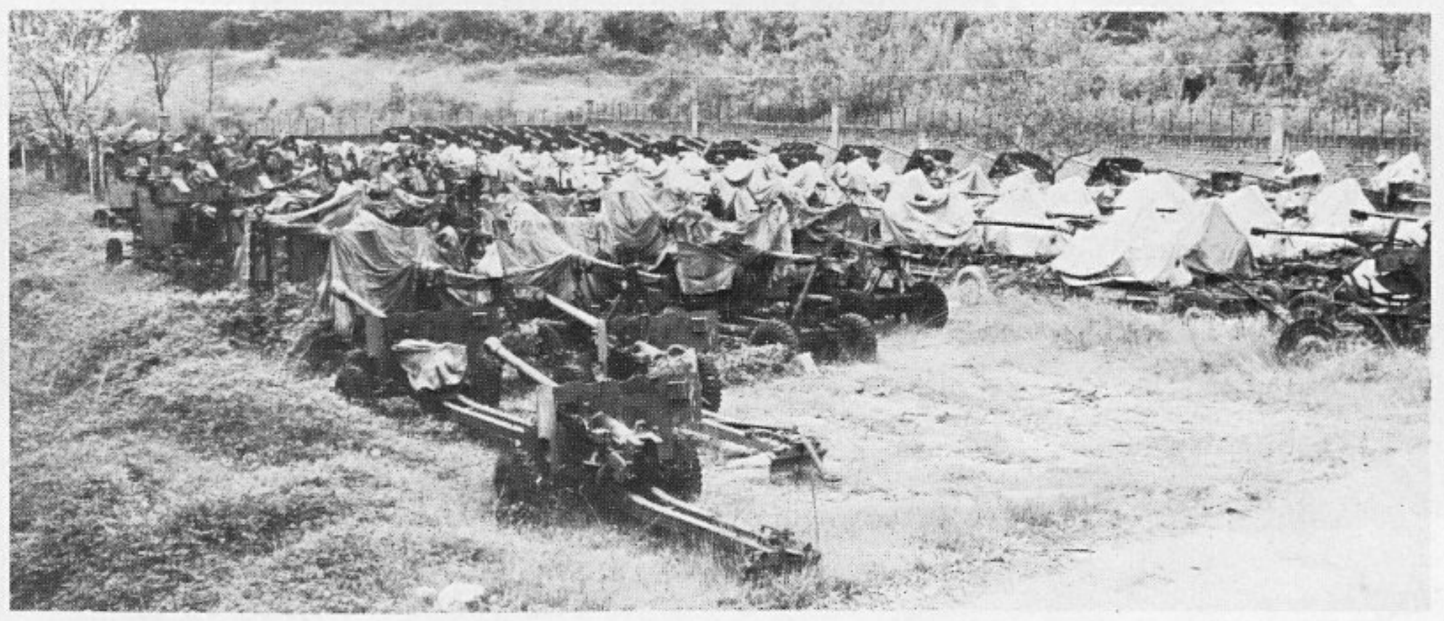
NARRATIVE

The 756 Tank Battalion, attached to 133 RCT, was to follow the infantry across the RAPIDO with its 54 Shermans and 17 light tanks and give close supporting fire. Two other Tank Battalions were also available to cross later. The 133 RCT attacked at 10.00 p.m. on January 24 and got bogged down almost at once. Exploding mines disorganised the men and the mud and water of the flooded plain prevented the advance of the tanks. At 4.30 a.m. on January 25, General Ryder extended his attack to the right, where the ground seemed firmer. The 3rd Battalion side-slipped from the southern end of the Barracks to the right of the 1st Battalion, bringing them into a position about 500 metres from point 156. The 100th Battalion moved still farther north into the area around the S bend of the RAPIDO, just to the left of Point 156. After an artillery preparation at 9.00 a.m., all three Battalions attacked and the 100th Battalion got some riflemen across the river in the vicinity of the S bend. There, a barbed wire entanglement covered by machine gun fire blocked further progress. By 1.30 p.m., after clearing a lane through a minefield, the 1st Battalion succeeded in getting several platoons across the river at the northern end of the Barracks. By about 5.30 p.m., the 3rd Battalion had established a small bridgehead over the river in the area to the left of POINT 156. However, throughout the day of the 25th and during the night of January 25/26 the three Battalions of 133 RCT could do little to expand their bridgehead.

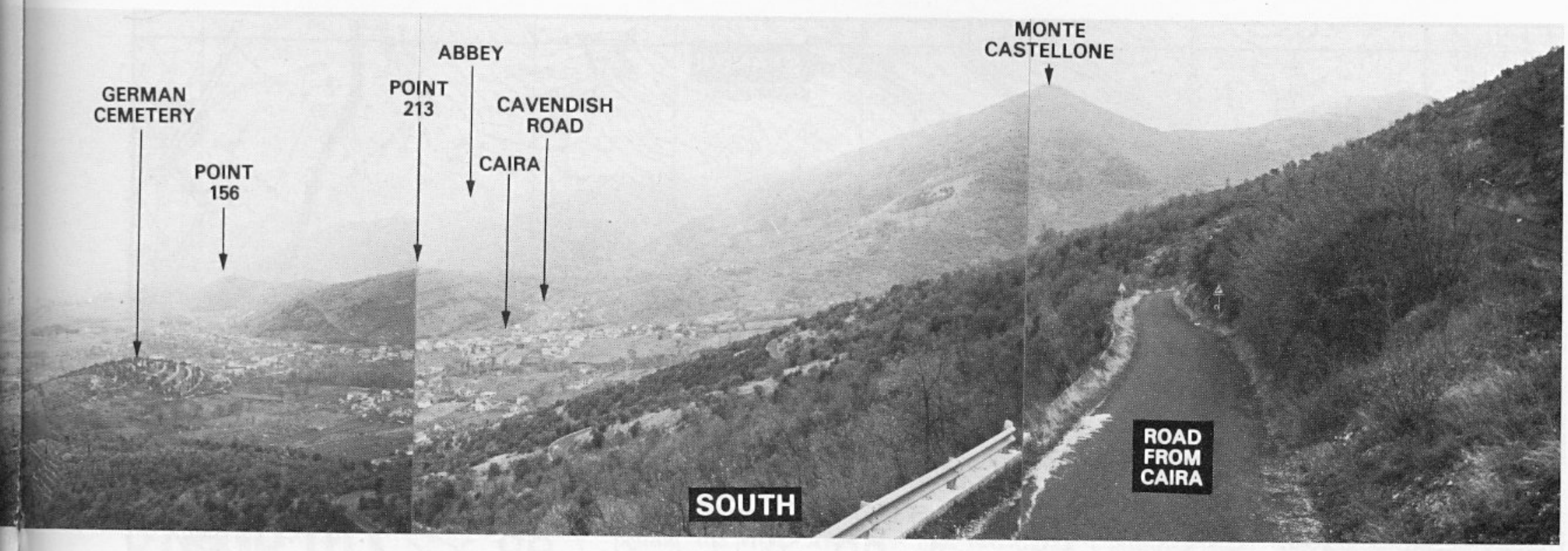
It was clearly necessary to eliminate German fire coming from the high ground, particularly from the area of POINT 213. General Ryder decided to commit 135 RCT, who were to cross the RAPIDO in the area just to the south and on the left of 133 RCT's crossing point at the southern end of the Barracks. The 135 RCT's task was to climb the mountainside behind POINT 156 and strike towards POINT 213 from the south. During the night of January 26/27 the 1st Battalion of 135 RCT managed to get a rifle Company across the river but, by 3.30 a.m. it was struggling unsuccessfully to move through flooded ditches, wire entanglements, mines and enemy fire. Supporting tanks were unable to ford the river because of the soggy approaches. Six tanks got stuck on the most likely route, blocking further progress until engineers had substantially improved the crossing site.

With parts of two RCTs holding small bridgeheads across the RAPIDO, it was imperative to get additional forces across and into the hills behind. General Ryder, prodded by General Keyes, the Corps Commander, immediately ordered 168 RCT to pass through 133 RCT that morning, January 27. They were to attack with two Battalions abreast, each preceded by a platoon of tanks. The tanks were to break down wire obstacles, overrun anti-personnel mines and destroy German strongpoints. The right-hand Battalion of 168 RCT was to cross at the S river bend, where 100 Battalion of 133 RCT had got across, and the left-hand Battalion of 168 RCT at the crossing point about 500 metres south, opposite POINT 156, where 3rd Battalion of 133 had crossed.

Just before daybreak, as the artillery preparation started, the tanks preceding the infantry assault troops moved towards the RAPIDO. Some tanks slipped off the narrow tracks, which were under water in many places, but two were across by 8.30 a.m. and two more by 9.15 a.m. However these had so churned up the ground that the tanks immediately behind bogged down and blocked further traffic. As engineers began at once to construct corduroy roads (tree trunks laid side by side) to the river, a process that would take most of the day, infantrymen followed in the lanes cleared by the tanks. Despite heavy German fire, each assault Battalion of 168 RCT got two rifle Companies across the RAPIDO. All four tanks which had reached the far bank were out of action by 1.00 p.m. — two destroyed by anti-tank fire, one with a damaged track from a mine and the fourth hit



An Italian dump of ex-British artillery (in the old barracks) to be seen en route to Stand II.



by a shell while returning to the crossing site for more ammunition. Nevertheless, the rifle Companies worked their way across the flat terrain beyond the river and, despite heavy losses, reached the base of the POINT 156 — POINT 213 feature by nightfall. A fifth rifle Company came across the RAPIDO after dark, climbed the feature and reached the top of POINT 213 undetected. Instead of remaining on the top, the Company Commander, deciding that his position would become untenable after daybreak, started to move his troops back. As he did so, the withdrawal turned into something of a rout and troops withdrew across the river. Believing that a retirement was taking place, two of the other Companies on the far bank became nervous, panicked and then followed. They were not stopped until they had reached the near bank. By then they were disorganised. In order not to expose them needlessly, in positions accurately known to the Germans, the two remaining Companies on the far bank were withdrawn across the river. They were then led north on the near bank to another crossing-point 500 metres this side of the S river bend. There they re-crossed the RAPIDO and moved about 600 metres beyond towards the village of CAIRA. Midway between the river and the village, two platoons prepared and occupied defensive positions. The rest of the Companies dug positions to protect the route from the crossing site, where it seemed possible to construct a track for tanks.

General Ryder now decided to commit all three Battalions of 168 RCT in an attack on the POINT 156-213 feature. With that feature in American hands, he felt that 133 RCT might finally capture the Barrack area and that an attack on MONTE CASTELLONE would be feasible.

With a heavy artillery barrage at dawn on January 29, 168 RCT, spearheaded by tanks of the US 760th Tank Battalion, began the attack against intense German resistance. They used the crossing site at the S bend and the one 500 metres north, i.e. this side of the S bend. Seven tanks had crossed the RAPIDO by 7.00 a.m., although two were quickly knocked out and two others rapidly used all their ammunition. The presence of the tanks, however, gave impetus to the infantry and all three Battalions were soon fighting on the far bank, making steady if slow progress towards the hill feature.

During the afternoon, General Ryder committed 756th Tank Battalion who found a good approach to the RAPIDO. When 23 of their tanks suddenly appeared at 4.00 p.m. across the river and blasted away at the numerous German machine gun positions at the base of the POINT 213 feature, the infantry attack picked up speed. While the tanks fired more than a thousand 75 mm rounds at virtually point-blank range, the rifle Companies advanced across the plain, which you see to the right of the RAPIDO. By 6.45 p.m., all three Infantry Battalions had reached the foot of the hills, moving through barbed wire entanglements ripped apart by shell fire. The troops climbed the slopes and by dawn on January 30, POINTS 156 and 213 were in American hands, though mopping-up operations continued until midday. German counter-attacks during the day were held and the next day, the village of CAIRA was captured, along with the HQs of 131st Grenadier Regiment.

During the period when these attacks were taking place the American right flank had been protected by the French Forces fighting above and behind this Stand and towards TERELLE. Fierce counter-attacks were held by them and, although German forces regained some ground, the French held on to COLLE BELVEDERE and COLLE ABATE.

Behind us, attached to the French and operating on their left flank were 142 RCT. (This was the RCT that had not been committed to battle in the attacks across the GARI). Now, however, they were to play a vital part in holding the area around MONTE CASTELLONE on the right of 34th Division who were now about to turn south, i.e. towards the Abbey, and thrust for Route 6.

In general terms from here three ridges run towards Route 6:

On the left — POINT 156 continuing through CASTLE HILL to MONASTERY HILL.

In the centre — POINT 213 feature above CAIRA village — up the ridge running along the left of the deep ravine and on up to the skyline to the second peak to the right of the MONASTERY.

On the right — MONTE CASTELLONE — the big peak to the right, continuing away behind it towards Route 6.

For this attack the plan was to put 133 RCT on the left and 135 RCT on the centre and right ridges. The 168 RCT were held ready to push through and beyond down to the LIRI Valley. The attack began on February 1, and, in the early hours in dense fog, 135 RCT assaulted and captured MONTE CASTELLONE. In the RAPIDO valley the 3rd Battalion of 133 RCT at last captured the BARRACKS behind POINT 156 and, by February 3rd, the American forward defensive localities were over the tops of the hills you can see. We shall see at Stand III just how far the Americans got.

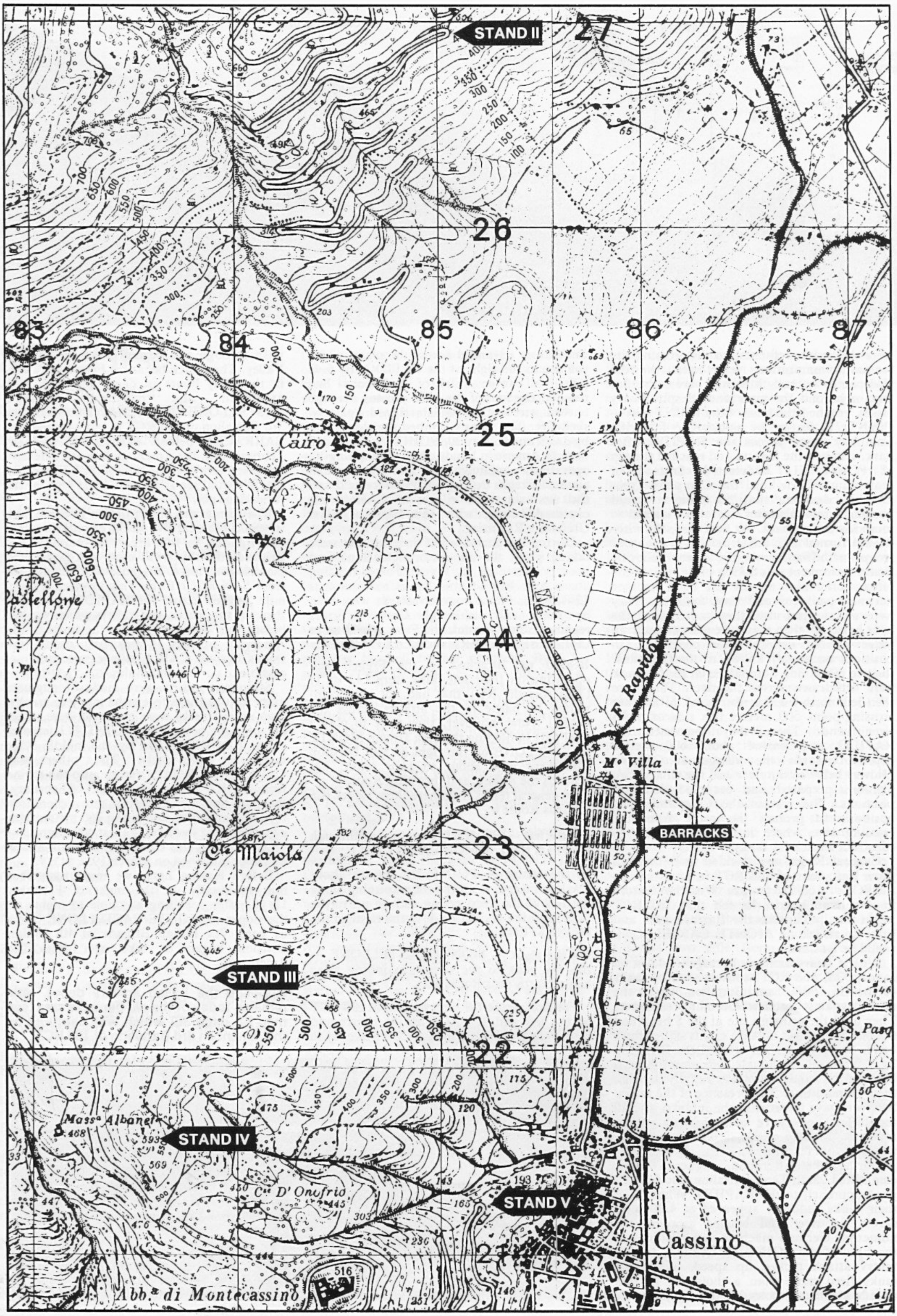
The formations of 4th Indian Division were to spend the next five weeks of bitter weather and fighting in this area. To maintain two Brigades the third was used as a porter and maintenance force. Brigades were maintained from SAN MICHELE. This involved a seven mile journey across the RAPIDO valley and then up the tracks and valleys which you see before you. Initially, during the times of the American attacks in this first battle, the tracks beyond CAIRA village were only accessible to porters and mules.

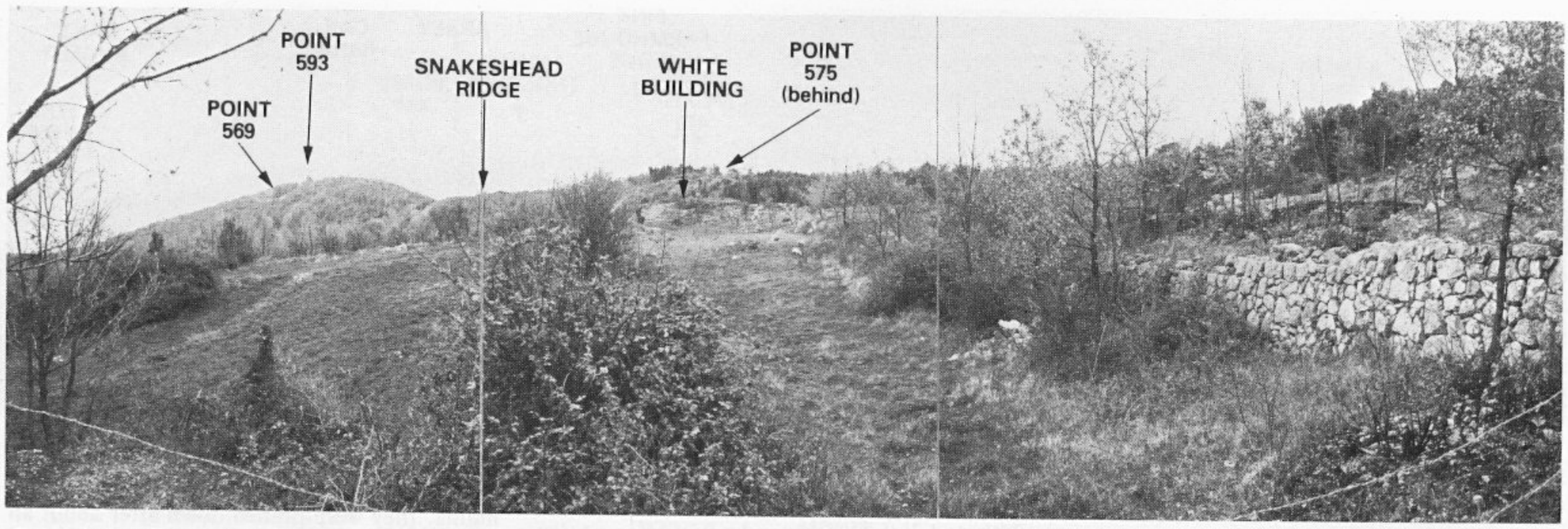
Strenuous efforts were made by engineer units to turn these footpaths into jeep tracks. Two major tracks were improved here. One, out of sight behind the POINT 213 feature, called ROORKEE, led up the middle ridge mentioned previously. The other was CAVENDISH ROAD, running up the ravine from CAIRA village. By the end of February, this path had been made into an excellent jeep road one mile long and rising 260 metres with a gradient of 1 in 4 over the last 400 metres.

It was along this track that the tank attack was to be launched on March 19.

Before leaving here, we must remember that eventually on the night of February 12/13, after spending a couple of nights on the slopes of MONTE CASTELLONE below us here, 7th Indian Brigade of 4th Indian Division began to take over from the Americans.

Opposite the Italian artillery depot, little remains today of the old barracks area (see map on page 30) which was captured by the American 3rd Battalion of 133 RCT.


STAND II
27
26
25
24
23
22
83
84
85
86
87
Cairo
Castellone
Ca Maiola
M° Villa
F Rapido
BARRACKS
STAND III
STAND IV
STAND V
Mass° Albanet
C.° D' Onofrio
Abb.ª di Montecassino
Cassino



STAND III

Northern end of Snakeshead Ridge
Grid Reference 839223

DIRECTIONS TO STAND

From Excelsior Hotel, take right fork, about 150 metres from the hotel, off Route 6 (to Rome) to the Monastery (Abbazia). At the top, before arriving at the Monastery car park, fork right to the Polish Cemetery (Cimitero Polacco). Proceed through the gates (leaving Cemetery on the right) and take the right turn along rough track, just before the second gates. Immediately before the left-hand hairpin bend, take track to right and proceed past the farmhouse building on the left, beyond the well and follow the terraced wall bending to the right. Continue until the view of Snakeshead ridge is similar to that in the panorama.

ORIENTATION (Panorama 50 degrees)

You are now looking in a southerly direction at the east slope of SNAKESHEAD RIDGE. To the left of the panorama is the POLISH MONUMENT on top of POINT 593. The ridge extending to right is the north-south crest of SNAKESHEAD RIDGE. The POINT 575 ridge lies beyond, about 1,000 metres away, running in a parallel direction. The MONASTERY, not visible, lies to the left of the panorama, about 1,200 metres distant.

There is, of course, a great deal of vegetation on SNAKESHEAD RIDGE today, but it should be remembered that in February 1944, the whole feature was bare, stony and rocky.

Although we shall refer to the end of the American 34th and 36th Divisions' attack during the First Battle, we are now jumping ahead a little to February 12 in order to deal with the Royal Sussex attacks in the Second Battle.

NARRATIVE

At 11.00 a.m. on February 12, the Royal Sussex were ordered to take over from the Americans that night. Owing to the uncertainty of the American positions, the Battalion was allotted a sector off the map and it was simply 'POINT 593—SNAKESHEAD'. On his preliminary reconnaissance, Colonel Glennie, CO of the Sussex, found that the sector was held by four US Battalions (each only about 100 strong) of three different Regiments of two different Divisions (the 34th and 36th).

After the relief, the Sussex found themselves astride the RIDGE. B and C Companies were at the far end, near the foot of POINT 593—the hill with the monument—with about 70 metres between their forward defensive localities and the Germans on the forward slope. A Company were along the ridge facing west—that is, across the valley to POINT 575. Battalion HQs were just behind the panorama and to the left, and D Company was in reserve behind the HQs. After the first two days, Colonel Glennie moved his HQs to the white farm building indicated in the panorama.

The position of the Sussex was not an enviable one for the Germans not only occupied the western, that is from here the far side of POINT 593, but were firmly entrenched in the ruins of an old fort near the summit. On the left they occupied the area of the MONASTERY and on the right they held POINT 575 and all the high ground, only 1,000 metres away, overlooking the RIDGE. They also held POINT 569, the far end of the RIDGE and only 200 metres beyond POINT 593.

Approaches to the Sussex sector from the Allied lines were overlooked by the Germans, especially from MONTE CAIRO and the Battalion was, therefore, in full view of the Germans from all sides. Their administrative situation was very bad. They had only the minimum ammunition, very few grenades and no reserve for the 2-inch mortars. The 3-inch mortar platoon initially relied on stocks of American ammunition left behind. The Battalion had no reserve rations and barely one blanket per man. Some American K rations and a few grenades left behind came in handy. The Battalion positions consisted of the most primitive and very shallow sangars. The rocky nature of the ground made digging impossible.

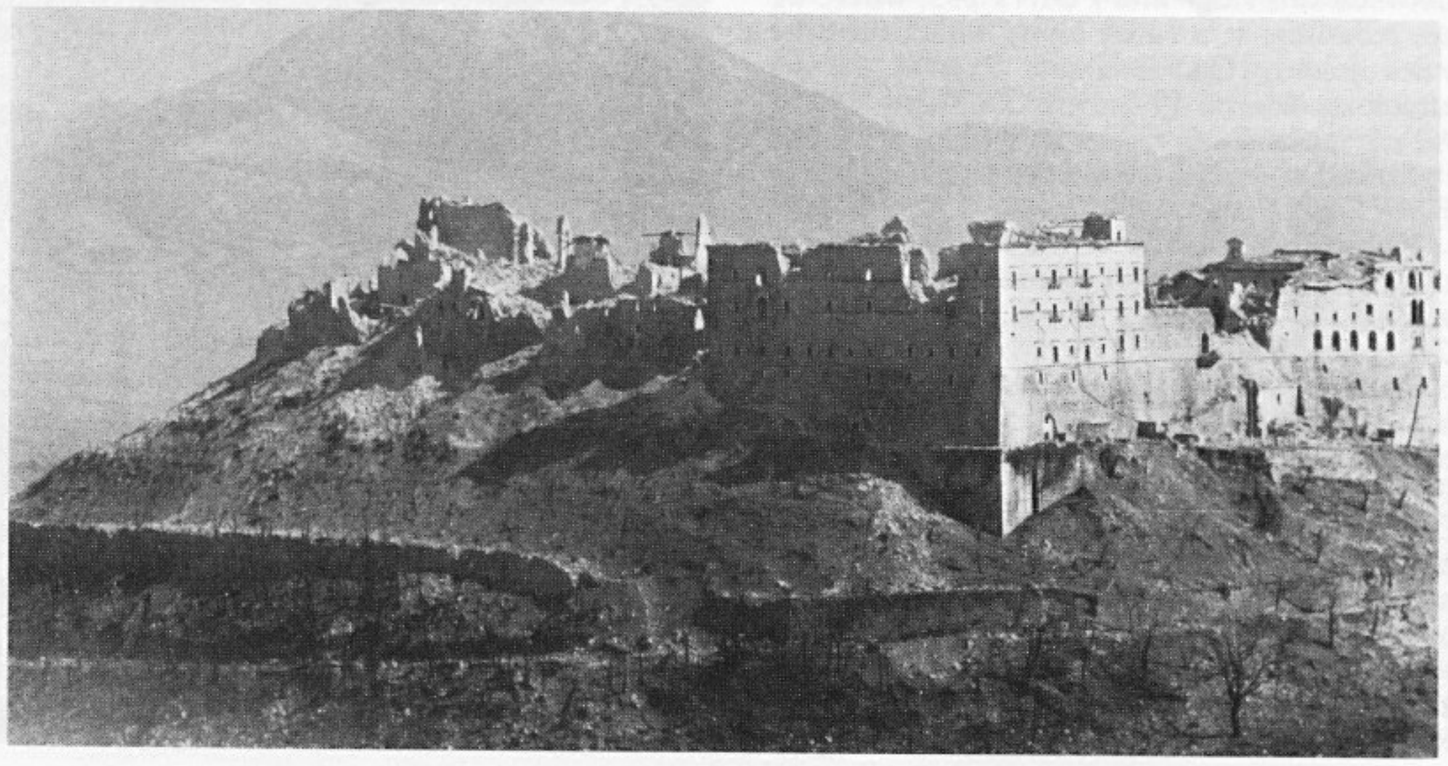
Movement by day on SNAKESHEAD was confined to cautious movement by individuals. Anything more invariably drew fire. Reconnaissance was virtually impossible. One patrol from C Company, during the night of February 13/14, tried to find a way round POINT 593 but silent movement on the rocky slopes at night was hardly possible and the patrol immediately bumped into opposition without really gaining any new information.

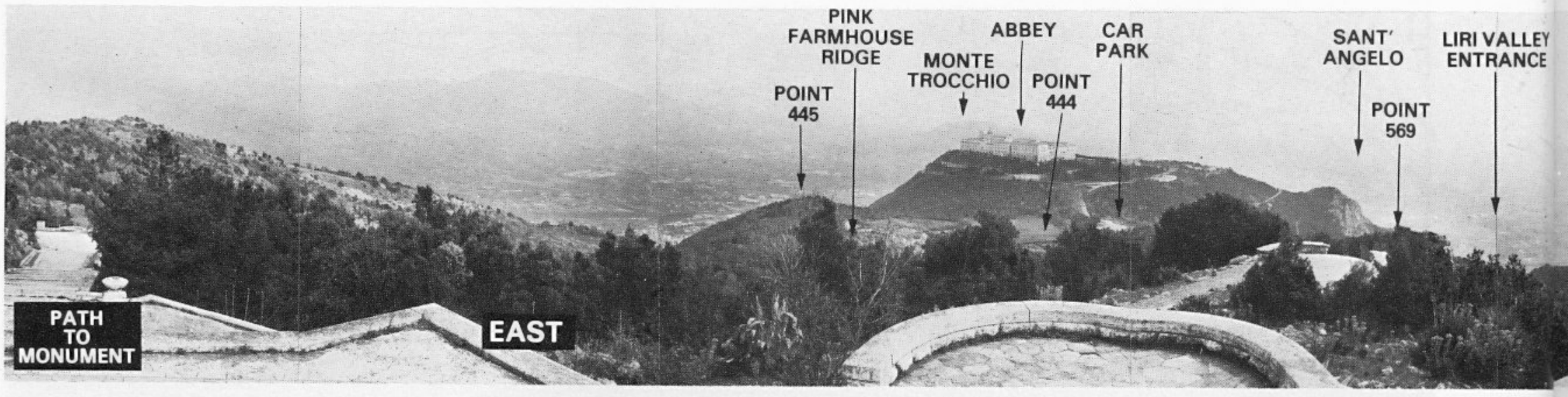
Tuesday, February 15, was cold but the sky was clearer than for some days past. At 9.25 a.m., the first bombs began to fall on the MONASTERY. The bombing, which continued throughout the morning, was an awe-inspiring sight, and the Sussex were in the front row of the stalls. Colonel Glennie and his Brigade HQ had not been told that the bombing had been brought forward and the first, shuddering explosions took the Battalion by surprise. After medium bombers had completed the task in the afternoon, the MONASTERY was left a smoking ruin, 'the jagged remnants of its walls rising from the crown of the hill like a rotten tooth'.

The bombing was not the only surprise that morning for Colonel Glennie. At mid-day he was ordered 'to clear 593' that night and establish his Battalion on the top. For while the bombing was actually in progress, the 4th Indian Divisional Commander held a conference at 7th Indian Brigade HQ at which Brigadier Lovett emphasised the view that it was impossible to persevere with the main attack on MONTE CASSINO until POINT 593 had been neutralised. The capture of 593 should be regarded as a separate operation and, in the light of this recommendation, the main attack on the Monastery was postponed for 24 hours. As a result, the Sussex were ordered to move against POINT 593.

Colonel Glennie's task was daunting. There was very limited room for deployment, no patrol information had as yet been built up, no reconnaissance was possible by day and very little was known of the German strength, or the ground except that it was hard and rocky and littered with loose stones which would make a silent approach nearly impossible. The CO decided that it was only feasible to deploy one Company for this clearing operation and C Company, under Major Dalton, with two other officers and sixty-three men, was given the task. What happened on the nights of February 15/16th and 16/17th has already been described briefly in the text for the Second Battle.

**'. . . rising from the hill like a rotten tooth'
A German photograph (Bundesarchiv).**





STAND IV

Point 593 beside Polish Monument
Grid Reference 836216

DIRECTIONS TO STAND

From Excelsior Hotel, take right fork, about 150 metres from the hotel, off Route 6 (to Rome) to the Monastery (Abbazia). At the top, before arriving at the Monastery car park, fork right towards the Polish Cemetery (Cimitero Polacco). Proceed through the gates (leaving Cemetery on the right) and take right turn along rough track, just before the second gates. Follow track as far as small car park at the foot of steps leading to Point 593. Stand III is at the monument.

ORIENTATION (Panorama 360 degrees)

To the left of the panorama, you are looking east across the RAPIDO valley, about 1500 ft below. A little to the right, MONTE CASSINO, with the MONASTERY on top, stands out clearly. Directly behind the building is MONTE TROCCHIO. At eight o'clock from the left-hand edge of the MONASTERY is POINT 445. In the valley, immediately below this side of the MONASTERY are, from left to right PINK FARMHOUSE RIDGE, POINT 444 and the CAR PARK. Going right of the MONASTERY and into the LIRI valley lies the village of SANT' ANGELO, at approximately one o'clock from the steep, rocky bluff at the right hand end of MONTE CASSINO. A little further to the right is POINT 569, the southern end of SNAKESHEAD RIDGE and about 200 metres away.

Moving further right, you are looking south across the LIRI valley entrance, towards the AURUNCI MOUNTAINS, unfortunately not visible on the panorama. Further right still, in the middleground, are POINTS 505 and 575. Between this ridge and POINT 593, where we are standing, is a valley along which runs the track joining CAVENDISH ROAD. In the attack on March 19 during the Third Battle, Allied tanks came down this track from the right and round the bend immediately below POINT 569.

Below POINT 575 in this valley are the ruins of ALBANETA FARM. The ridge leading to the right from POINT 575 is COLLE SANT'ANGELO

Still moving right, we come to POINT 706, with PHANTOM RIDGE running from it towards us. The dominating feature above PHANTOM RIDGE is the 5,000 ft MONTE CAIRO. To the right of POINT 706 is MONTE CASTELLONE, the other side of which you can see in the STAND II panorama. As we come full circle, the well-vegetated ridge along which you are looking in a northerly direction is SNAKESHEAD RIDGE.

BACKGROUND

You will recall that it was the American 34th and 36th Divisions who first attempted to capture the MONASTERY from the north and round the back. We saw at the second Stand above CAIRA village how this attack started across the RAPIDO. After much heavy fighting which included a sally right up to the northern wall of the MONASTERY itself, the Americans finally established themselves along a line running from just left of MONTE CASTELLONE, through POINT 706, along the right-hand side of PHANTOM RIDGE to SNAKESHEAD RIDGE about 100 metres below us, across to PINK ROOFED FARMHOUSE and then left into the ravine to the left of the MONASTERY. The relief of the Americans by the 7th Indian Brigade of 4th Indian Division now began and it was at this point that the 1st Royal Sussex Battalion under Lieutenant Colonel Glennie arrived on SNAKESHEAD RIDGE.

NARRATIVE

After the Royal Sussex Company and Battalion attacks on February 15/16 and 16/17, there was a further and bigger attack on the night of February 17/18.

The 4/16th Punjabs were occupying the ground behind the Sussex at the far end of SNAKESHEAD and the plan was for the 4/6th Rajputana Rifles of 11th Indian Brigade to pass through the Sussex at midnight in another attempt to gain POINT 593, here, and, if they succeeded, to advance to the CAR PARK between this end of SNAKESHEAD and the MONASTERY. At 2.15 a.m. on February 18, 1/2nd Gurkhas of 7th Brigade and 1/9th Gurkhas of 5th Brigade were to make a direct assault on MONASTERY HILL, short-cutting across the elbow of SNAKESHEAD to the left of the Monastery, as seen in the panorama.

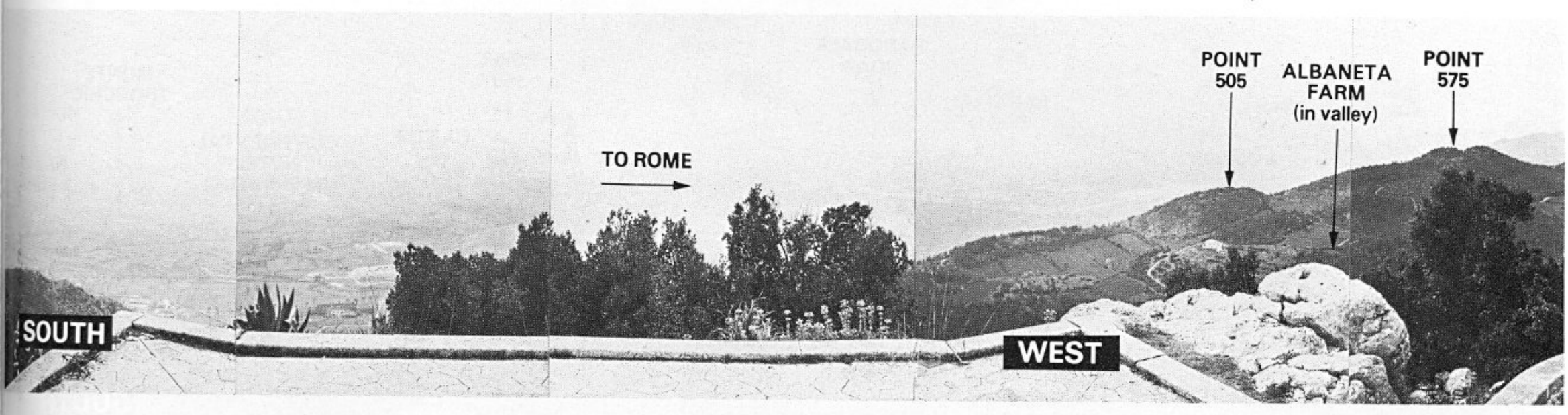
At midnight, February 17/18, B and C Companies of the 4/6th Rajputs began, like the Royal Sussex the night before, to edge cautiously along the RIDGE towards us here on POINT 593. And, as on the two previous nights, they were pinned down after about an hour on the lower northern slopes in front of you by intense enemy fire. But individuals and small groups did manage, at heavy cost, to reach the summit here, where there was desperate fighting to repel fierce German counter-attacks. By 3.15 a.m., all three forward companies were pinned down and were quite unable to advance to the CAR PARK.

About 300 metres to the left of the Rajputs, the Gurkhas moved off towards the MONASTERY, with the CAR PARK as their first objective. After a very short distance, they were caught in overwhelming cross-fire from the PINK FARMHOUSE RIDGE on their left and from 593, here, on their right. The Gurkhas tried to deal with these enemy posts and, although this brought them up on the immediate left of the Rajputs, neither Battalion could make headway.

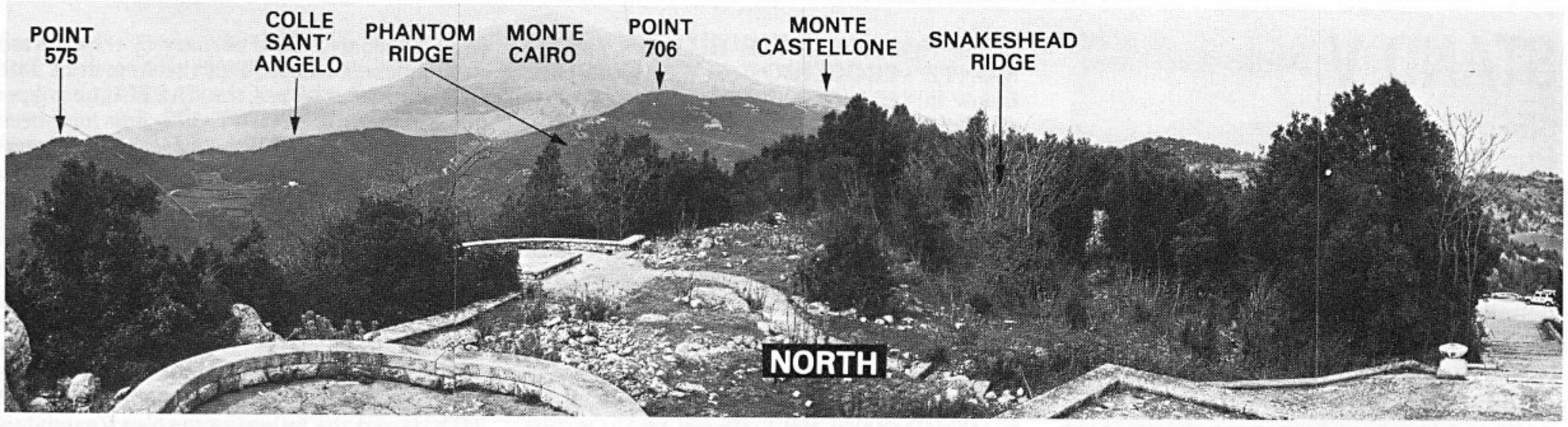
The 1/2nd Gurkhas now attempted to approach the Monastery via the PINK ROOFED FARMHOUSE. They worked their way down the ravine at the bottom of the northern slopes of MONASTERY HILL and, as the leading platoons neared what they thought to be a belt of scrub, they were showered by grenades from higher ground above. They dashed forward and found themselves in a thicket of neck-high thorn, barbed wire and trip wires. Anti-personnel mines exploded all round them and the leading companies were either blown up by the mines or mown down by the hail of machine-gun bullets from guns sited along the width of the northern slope of MONASTERY HILL. Despite this, some strong-points were overcome but the Battalion could make no further progress towards the MONASTERY.

Meanwhile, hand-to-hand fighting continued on and around POINT 593 here for

The hills and mountains around Cassino must be the resting place of many pieces of discarded equipment. This rusted helmet was found below the Monastery.



CONTINUATION BELOW FROM RIGHT-HAND EDGE OF PANORAMA ABOVE.



most of the night and a number of German counter-attacks were beaten off by the Rajputs. However, before first light on the 18th, it was obvious that neither the Rajputs here nor the Gurkhas on the slopes below them on their left, could survive long in daylight. And so, as before, the Rajputs retired from near the crest of 593 and, when daylight came, they had three companies on the reverse slopes, with one in reserve. The Sussex were on the ridge behind and the Gurkhas were withdrawn to dig in on the reverse slope of the PINK FARMHOUSE RIDGE. All attacks, therefore, had failed and, excluding the Sussex, there were now three battalions pinned down.

This ended the Second Battle. The Third Battle took place in CASSINO TOWN and on the far side, from here, of MONASTERY HILL and we shall deal with that at our next Stand. But, while we are here and can enjoy our superb vantage point, we want to go through very briefly the story of the Fourth and last Battle.

The Fourth Battle took place along the whole front from the GULF OF GAETA to the CASSINO MOUNTAINS here. There were five Corps involved, the 2nd American, the French, the 13th British, the 1st Canadian and 2nd Polish

The American 85th and 88th Divisions and the four divisions and the Goumiers of the French Corps comprised the American Fifth Army. Their front extended from the sea about 25 miles south from here to the LIRI river, running along the other side from here of the LIRI valley. The battle started on May 11 and the advance of the French was nothing less than spectacular. By May 19 the whole of the mountain mass of the AURUNCI had been cleared of the enemy.

There was a close connection between the attack in the valley below us and the attack of the 2nd Polish Corps here in the mountains. The 13th British Corps in the valley had the task of securing bridgeheads over the GARI river, which we saw at Stand I. They were then to cut ROUTE 6 immediately below us here, isolate CASSINO town and join up with the 2nd Polish Corps who were to attack here in the Mountains, capture the MONASTERY, and advance to ROUTE 6.

On the night of May 11/12, 4th British Division attacked over the GARI, north of SANT'ANGELO, i.e. left of the village from here, and 8th Indian Division attacked south of SANT'ANGELO, i.e. to the right of the village. The same night, at 1.00 a.m. on May 12, the 2nd Polish Corps attacked towards us and the MONASTERY from the general direction of MONTE CASTELLONE. After intense, hand-to-hand fighting, the 5th Wilno Brigade of the Kresowa Division captured PHANTOM RIDGE. The 1st Carpathian Rifle Brigade succeeded in taking POINT 593 here and reached the northern slope of POINT 569. But both brigades suffered heavy casualties and, because of the difficulties of reinforcement, General Anders decided to withdraw in the evening to their start line.

However, steady progress was made during the next few days in the LIRI valley by 13th British Corps and by the Canadian Corps. On May 16, 78th British Division attacked northwards across the LIRI Valley towards us here and made such progress that Eighth Army ordered the Polish Corps to launch their second attack on the next morning, May 17.

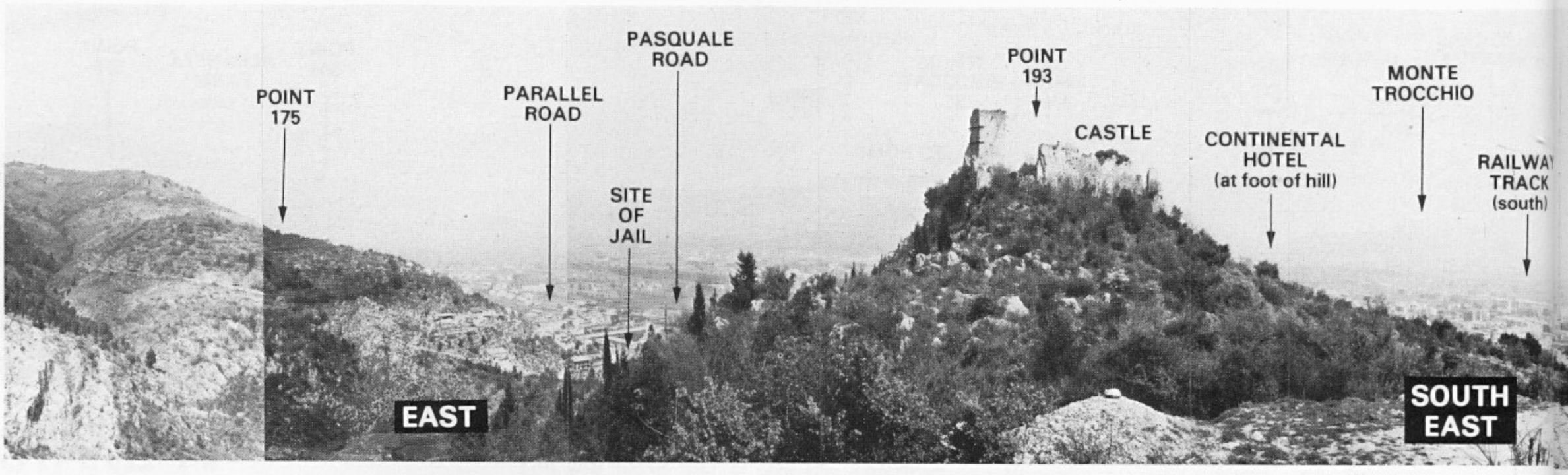
General Anders' plan for his second attack was similar to his first. The 3rd Carpathian Division was to attack this POINT again, POINT 569 and ALBANETA FARM and was then to await further orders before advancing south-east towards the MONASTERY. The 5th Kresowa Division was to attack and take the northern end of PHANTOM RIDGE, COLLE SANT'ANGELO and POINT 575. A group of brigade strength was then to carry the attack over and down the hill to the LIRI valley below. Thus the two mountain ridges running from north to south (i.e. COLLE SANT'ANGELO to 575 and SNAKESHEAD to 593) were being attacked simultaneously.

The Germans had also lost heavily in the first Polish attack and two of the three battalions holding the Polish objectives, the 2nd of 100th Mountain Regiment and the 1st of 3rd Parachute Regiment, were below strength.

The Polish plan was modified at the last moment. During the night of May 16, a company of the 16th Battalion of the Kresowa Division, making a reconnaissance in force on PHANTOM RIDGE, captured a number of enemy positions and the Battalion Commander, quickly exploiting success, had his remaining companies on the RIDGE before midnight. A strong German counter-attack failed to dislodge them. At 7.10 a.m. the next morning, the 17th Battalion passed through the 16th and captured COLLE SANT' ANGELO. They came under heavy fire from their right and survived two counter-attacks. The 17th Battalion were running out of ammunition and the Germans in their third counter-attack recaptured the southern end of the COLLE (i.e. the end nearest to POINT 575) but the 18th and 16th Polish Battalions moved forward and recaptured it. The 2nd Brigade of 3rd Carpathian Division had started their attack on POINT 593 here and ALBANETA FARM at about the same time, 7.10 a.m. They were supported by the 2nd Tank Squadron. The 6th Battalion advanced to the defile north of ALBANETA FARM with a company of sappers. It was soon obvious that the clearing of Germans and mines in the area was going to take time and the 4th Battalion attacked this position here at 9.20 a.m. while ALBANETA FARM was neutralised by fire. In spite of a violent German counter-attack the Battalion forced its way to this point by 11.30 a.m.

In the early afternoon, a company of 6th Battalion advanced to within 200 metres of the ALBANETA FARM but were halted by heavy fire from well-hidden, well-dispersed, steel pill-boxes. The 4th Battalion attacked from here towards POINT 569 but was held up by Germans in an old fort and by mortar fire from the MONASTERY and machine-gun fire from POINT 575. The 5th Battalion came forward to reinforce but it was soon clear that POINT 569 could not be taken until ALBANETA FARM had been captured. The Poles prepared defensive positions for the night. Meanwhile, in the valley below 10th Brigade of the 4th British Division advanced to the railway and put patrols across Route 6 just below us here. The 12th Brigade reached Route 6 below POINT 505 by midday. CASSINO was cut off.

During the night of May 17/18, the Germans abandoned their positions on MONASTERY HILL and the next morning, a patrol of the 12th Podolski Lancers moved across the CAR PARK area and the Polish flag was raised on the MONASTERY ruins at 10.20 a.m.



STAND V

Site of Yellow House
Grid Reference 853213

DIRECTIONS TO STAND

Directions as for Stand III as far as hairpin bend adjacent to the Castle. Stand is on the flat area about 150 metres from the Castle ruins.

ORIENTATION (Panorama 300 degrees)

To the left of the panorama, across the ravine is POINT 175. At four o'clock from there, in the valley below, you can see the northern end of CASSINO town. Above the buildings you are looking in an easterly direction across the RAPIDO valley. PARALLEL, PASQUALE and CARUSO roads (the latter running immediately below POINT 175 and not visible on the photograph) all run in a northerly direction up the RAPIDO valley.

In the centre of the panorama is the ruined CASTLE and CASTLE HILL (POINT 193), and immediately below at its foot stood the old CONTINENTAL HOTEL. In the background to the right of CASTLE HILL you can see MONTE TROCCHIO to the south-east. Below this feature in the middleground is the southern end of the new CASSINO TOWN, with the RAILWAY STATION and railway line in the same position as they were in 1944.

To the right of this part of the town, ROUTE 6 (not visible) to Rome runs from the CONTINENTAL HOTEL round the base of the hill before turning right up the LIRI valley.

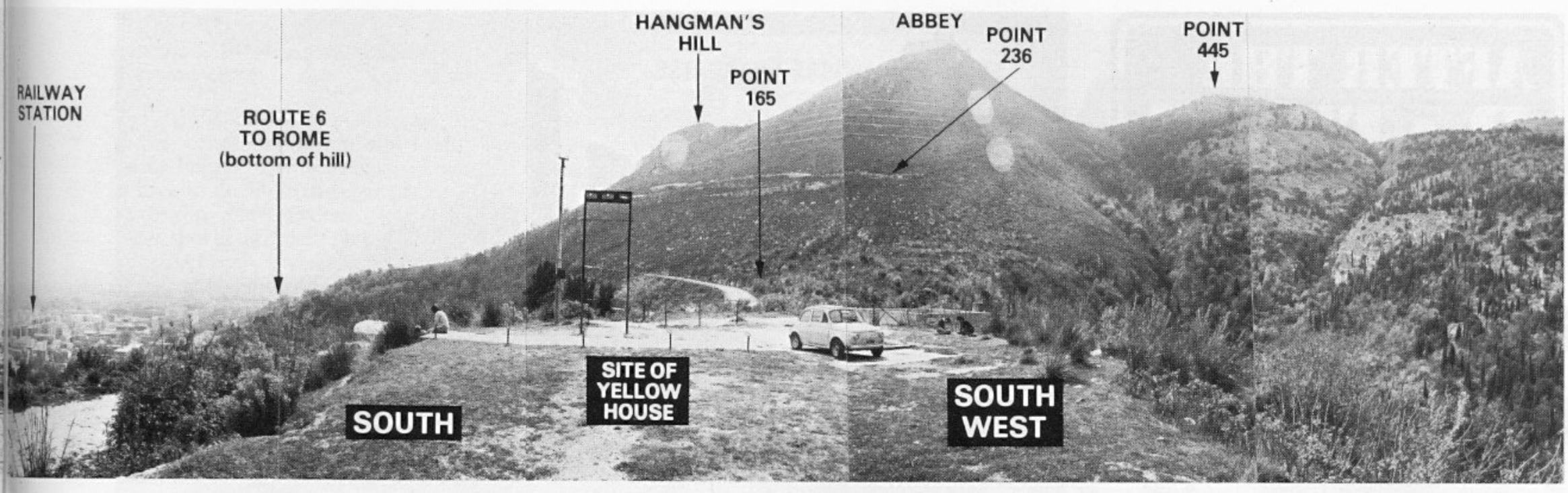
On the right of the panorama is MONTE CASSINO and the MONASTERY, 1,000 feet higher than the CASTLE. The prominent, rocky outcrop to the left of the MONASTERY is HANGMAN'S HILL (Point 435). On this northern slope of MONTE CASSINO, you can see POINT 165 above the lower hairpin and, above it a little to the right, POINT 236, at the next hairpin. The prominent feature to the right of MONTE CASSINO is POINT 445. Behind this and MONTE CASSINO lies the LIRI valley.

NARRATIVE

You are standing, on the site of the YELLOW HOUSE. Before dealing with part of the Third Battle in March we must refer for a moment to the end of the First Battle in early February. On February 5, the forward companies of 133 RCT of the American 34th Division had attacked the CASTLE here from the direction of POINT 175 but had been thrown back onto 175 by a German counter-attack down in the gully on the right of the panorama. On February 8 the Americans also tried to take POINT 236, but failed. However, the hold on POINT 175 was never given up and this helped the New Zealanders considerably on March 15 when they attacked the CASTLE here.

Now to the stirring and remarkable events of the Third Battle in this area. Following the stalemate in the hills around SNAKESHEAD RIDGE and the failure of the New Zealanders to open a way over the RAPIDO via the Railway track on February 17/18, the decision to destroy CASSINO town was made. It was believed that, by destroying this obstacle on the road to Rome, forces would sweep through the town and round the corner into the LIRI Valley. The main attack therefore was to be made down CARUSO and PARALLEL Roads from the north. Troops to secure the right

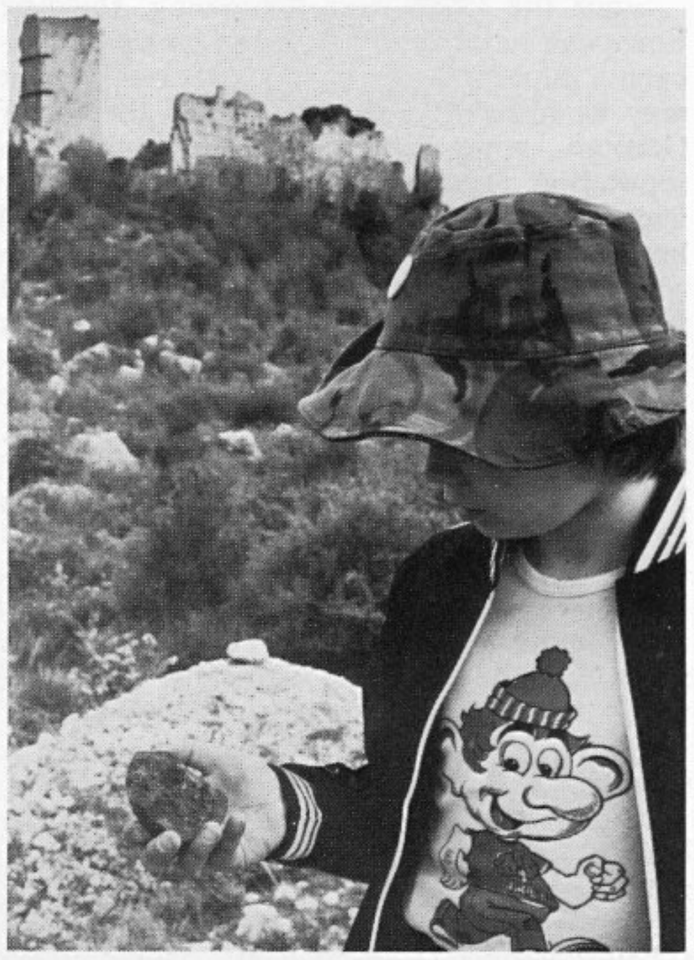
Colonel Green autographs a picture of Rommel at Stand V for enthusiastic German veterans on their own battlefield tour of the Gustav Line.



flank and capture the MONASTERY were held back a mile or so behind POINT 175. Supporting formations, the 24th New Zealand Battalion and units of the 4th New Zealand Armoured Brigade, were held up PASQUALE Road.

The bombing of the town took place on March 15 and, unlike the attack on the MONASTERY a month earlier, the attacking troops began to move into the town as the last planes turned for home. The troops had wisely been pulled back 1000 metres from their original forward defensive localities so they did not reach the shattered town until 12.30 p.m. and the tanks an hour later. The latter had been required to make a detour round huge bomb craters on PARALLEL ROAD. The attacking New Zealand troops came under heavy fire as they passed the prison at the northern edge of the old town and so began the battle among the rubble and ruins which was to last for another eleven days.

The 25th New Zealand Battalion had, as a secondary task in the advance through the town, the job of capturing the Castle here. D Company was allocated this task. The plan was that one platoon (16) should work its way round the front of POINT 175, up the gully to the left of CASTLE HILL and take POINT 165 immediately above the hairpin bend. You will realise the near precipitous nature of this approach. Whilst 16 Platoon were doing this, 17 and 18 Platoons were to go round the base of CASTLE HILL, along the edge of the town and assault from the right of the CASTLE as you see it. This latter move took much longer because of the numbers of the Germans who had survived the bombing and who were holding out in the town. In the event 16 Platoon, moving via the gully, captured POINT 165 along with 23 German prisoners before the other two turned up. An attempt was made to capture the CASTLE but this was driven off by the Germans inside. When the other two platoons arrived, coming up from the right of the CASTLE as you see it from here, a successful attack was mounted in face of heavy machine gun fire. By 4.45 p.m. at a cost of six killed and fifteen wounded, CASTLE HILL was firmly in New Zealand hands. At nightfall, 16 Platoon was withdrawn from its isolated position on POINT 165 into the CASTLE, where they probably spent a better night than their comrades in the town, for by now it was pouring with rain. Through this downpour, men of the 1/4th Essex moved down CARUSO road to take over from the New Zealanders here in the Castle.



Castle Hill is littered with unexploded German grenades and metal fragments making a climb up the hill rather worrying.

Below: A damaged German PAK38 5cm anti-tank gun in Cassino Square.

AFTER THE BATTLE

PERSONALITY

Oberjaeger Max Schmeling

Since the 1920s Max Schmeling, the first European to be World Boxing Champion, has been a popular figure in sporting circles and it may be fairly said that he is still the senior German sportsman. He has upheld a reputation for fairness proven by his close friendships over the years, in international boxing circles. During the 1939-45 war, he was known throughout the Allied armies and from time to time news flashes about him filtered through.

He was born in Klein Luckow, a village north-east of Berlin on September 28, 1905. A schoolboy during the First World War, young Max was brought up in Hamburg, and was able to convince his father, a retired Hamburg-Amerika Line coxwain, that boxing was the only career for him. His idol was Jack Dempsey who had been World Champion from 1919, and by 1928, at twenty-two, Max was German and European Light Heavyweight as well as German Heavyweight Champion.

In that year he went to the USA to try his luck and began by getting Joe Jacobs to be his manager. He won his first fight there on November 24, 1928 in Madison Square Garden against Joe Monte by a knockout in the 8th round. Max says that apart from his strong right, another factor which helped his career in the States was his likeness to Jack Dempsey. Two factors, perhaps, which helped him to get four more fights in 1929, all of which he won.

On June 12, 1930 Max fought American Jack Sharkey for the vacant title in the Yankee Stadium; the result was an unsatisfactory victory through disqualification of Sharkey for a low blow in the 4th round, which made Max the World Champion. He defended—and justified—his title on July 7, 1931 in Cleveland, Ohio, against Young Stribling with a technical knockout in the 15th round.

On June 21, 1932, Max defended his world title against Jack Sharkey at the new Garden Bowl, Long Island, but lost on points—a decision much disputed by the experts. After the fight, Joe Jacobs coined the phrase which was quickly added to every fight manager's vocabulary—'We wuz robbed.'

Max immediately set about regaining his title and beat Mickey Walker in an eliminating bout but three months later, on June 8, 1933, lost severely to Max Baer in the 10th round.

Back in Germany, Max married the Czech filmstar Anny Ondra on July 20, 1933, and this happy marriage has survived all the ups and downs of Max' career. He has many friends among artistes and even starred in a film himself 'Love in the Ring.'

Striving for a 'come back,' Max suffered yet another reverse with a draw in a fight against Paolino Uzcudun, in Barcelona on May 13, 1935. However, things started looking up when he beat Walter Neusel by a technical knockout at Hamburg in 1934, followed by two more victories—against Hamas in Hamburg and Uzcudun in Berlin.

The next step was to arrange a fight against

EDITION EN LANGUE FRANÇAISE
Signal
Un parachutiste que le monde entier connaît bien: Max Schmeling
Reportage illustré publié dans ce numéro

Max Schmeling on the front cover of Signal magazine in March 1941.

Above: Seven weeks after their first fight, Max Schmeling (world heavyweight champion 1930-32) visits Joe Louis at his Pompton Lakes training camp on August 8, 1936 as Louis was preparing to fight Jack Sharkey (Associated Press).

Right: Max Schmeling, third from left, pictured after a successful jump at the training camp (Associated Press).

Joe Louis, a young American beginning to make a name for himself. About this time Max helped the American Olympic Committee to decide to appear at the 1936 Games in Berlin. Nevertheless, he fell out with the Nazi sports authorities, especially the Reichssportfuehrer, who demanded that he box more in Germany and, soon thereafter, that he drop his Jewish manager. He had no intention of doing this and arranged a meeting with Hitler. This took place together with his wife at teatime. The first question was whether Max was a party member to which he answered that in his view, sportsmen should remain non-political. Max then defended his manager pointing out that he had been with him since 1928, that he was decent and honest and a whole lot more. Finally, Hitler commented that the cake was good, so that Max knew that he had won! Joe Jacobs remained his manager until his death in 1940.

On June 18, 1936, Max fought Joe Louis in the Yankee Stadium. Few people thought the German had a chance in this youth v. age battle and the odds were 14:1 on Joe Louis winning. In a hard fight, during which the 'Brown Bomber' went down for 4 seconds in the 4th round, he was knocked out by Max in the 12th. In retrospect, this was the real highlight in Max' boxing career. In theory, it opened the way for a fight with Jimmy Braddock, the reigning World Champion, who he had a good chance of beating to become World Champion for the second time. However, Braddock failed to appear in New York on June 8, 1937 and was suspended and fined (instead he fought and lost to Joe Louis that month in Chicago).

A fight in London against Tommy Farr was cancelled due to technical problems but back in the USA, Max fought and beat Harry Thomas by a knock-out in the 8th round. Two fights followed in Hamburg—Max beat Ben Foord, the British Empire Champion, on January 30, 1938 on points and later Steve Dundas by a knock out.

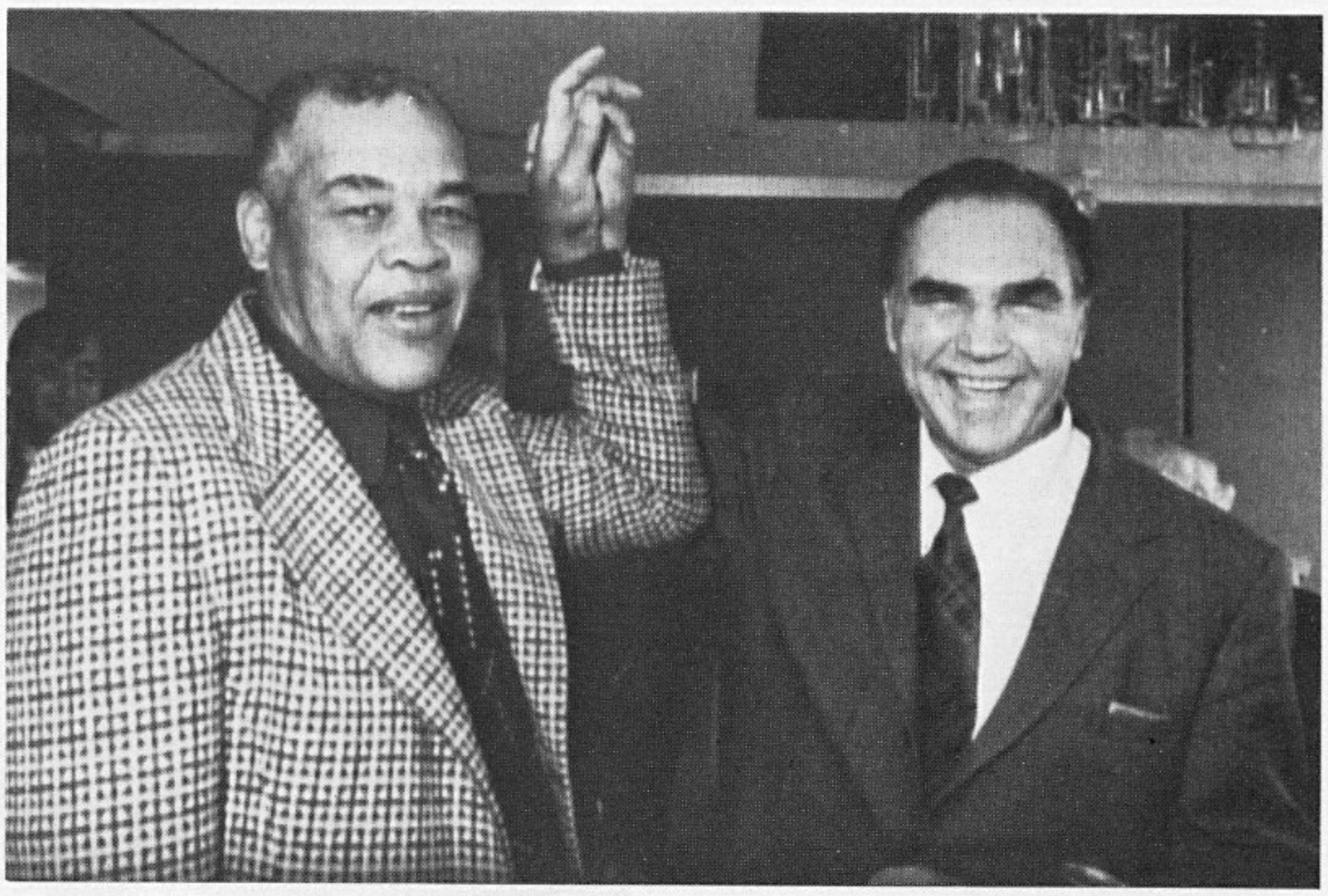
In June 1938, Max had his second attempt at the World Championship in the Yankee Stadium. In the first round Joe Louis hit Max on the temple and he returned with a right to the face. Then Joe slammed a right at Max which caught him turning and so struck him in the kidney. This blow crippled Max and the fight was over in 2 minutes 4 seconds. An X-ray photo showed 2 cracks in spinal vertebrae. Max says that the blow was not a foul as he should not have turned away!

His last pre-war fight was on July 2, 1939 against Adolf Heuser in Stuttgart which he won by a knock-out in 71 seconds.

In 1940, Max received his military call-up papers and volunteered as a paratrooper at the Fallschirm-Ergaenzungs-Battaillon (Reenforcement Battalion) at Stendal and the Fallschirmjager Schule (Paratroop School) at Wittstock. At the end of his training he moved to Greece and took part in the airborne invasion of Crete. He took off from Topolion airfield in a Junkers Ju52 on May 20, 1941, the first day of Operation Merkur (Mercury). Oberjaeger Max Schmeling, of 1 Battaillons, Fallschirmregiment 3 commanded by Oberst Richard Heidrich (later divisional commander at Cassino), parachuted south of Canea. He survived the defensive fire, but landed heavily injuring the meniscus of each knee and suffering severe pain in his back where Joe Louis had hit him in 1938. As he says, his participation was, perforce, slight and he was 'spared having to shoot at human beings.'

He had to go to the field hospital located in Aya Cania prison, located some 3 miles from the town. This required a walk of almost an hour and a group of wounded with British prisoners-of-war and sentries was formed. Two of the British prisoners supported Max

Above: German photograph released to the world's press on June 23, 1941 showing Max in hospital in Athens (note the orderly's British-style shirt) (Associated Press).



Above: A unique photograph taken exactly 37 years to the day after the one on the opposite page when Max arrived in New York to promote a US-German amateur match on August 8, 1973 (Associated Press).

May 1945 — Max gives autographs to two British fans, Cpl. H. Atherton (left) and Sgt. E. A. Wade (right) of 53 (W) Division Provost Company who had just checked his papers in Hamburg (IWM).

Picture taken September 10, 1945 of Max under guard awaiting trial at the Military Government Court in Hamburg charged with a breach of Military Ordinance (IWM).

who could only walk with difficulty. He was recognized as Max Schmeling and one, being a Welshman, led Max to talk about Tommy Farr.

The next stop was a military hospital in Athens, as he was also suffering from dysentery which caused a considerable loss of weight. Here he was interviewed by the American reporter, John Flannery (the USA being then neutral), who asked him whether it was true that British troops on Crete had committed atrocities. 'Not to my knowledge,' he answered. 'How did this rumour originate, Max', Flannery asked. 'As far as I know the inhabitants of the island often went too far in their hatred of the Germans,' Max answered, 'and presumably one put the Cretan blame on the Tommies.'

This interview, which had been authorized by the Propaganda Ministry, was printed in the USA and caused Dr. Goebbels to have a minor fit—he tried to cite Max in front of a People's Court, but other paratroopers confirmed his views and finally Goebbels was only able to have a confidential ban placed on mentioning Max Schmeling's name in the German press.

As a result of his knee and back injuries, Max was released from military service in 1943, having been awarded the Iron Cross 1st and 2nd Class, and he was able to reassume the administration of his farm estate. However, the Wehrmacht still needed his services and he was given regular instructions to visit American and British POW camps where he sat and discussed boxing matches with groups of prisoners. At the same time, Joe Louis was giving boxing display bouts to German POWs in the USA.

In early 1945, Max' estate at Ponickel, which had once been presented by the Kingdom of Prussia to Marshal Bluecher for his services against Napoleon, was overrun by the Red Army and Max and his wife joined the flood of refugees. On May 6, Max set off from Schleswig with his friend John Jahr in a DKW car to get to Hamburg, which had surrendered to the British 7th Armoured Division three days earlier. At Hademarschen they were stopped by a British patrol and the car was searched: Max' camera and binoculars were taken. A sergeant looking out of a tank turret called to him, 'I think I know you. You are a boxer?' After recognition an officer called up by radio talked to him about German boxers, returned his stolen property and he was issued with a pass. He was stopped another seven times and each time the procedure was identical: brusque request for papers, then a salute with the words, 'Good luck, Max Schmeling'.

While experiences with the Tommies were friendly, Max' relationship with the British Military Government was not so successful. For not having adhered closely to building regulations when building a small house in Hamburg, he was fined 10,000 Reichsmarks and obliged to spend 3 months in prison.

Thereafter, Max had his second try at a boxing career: his first post-war fight was in the Frankfurt Stadium on his 42nd birthday in 1947 against Werner Vollmer, who was 16 years younger. Thousands of Americans in the audience stood up and sang, 'Happy birthday to you . . . happy birthday to Max!' as he went to the ring. He found his reactions too slow, but Vollmer was slower, suffering a knockout in the 7th round. Max also won his next fight, later that year in Hamburg, against Hans Joachim Draengemeister on points.

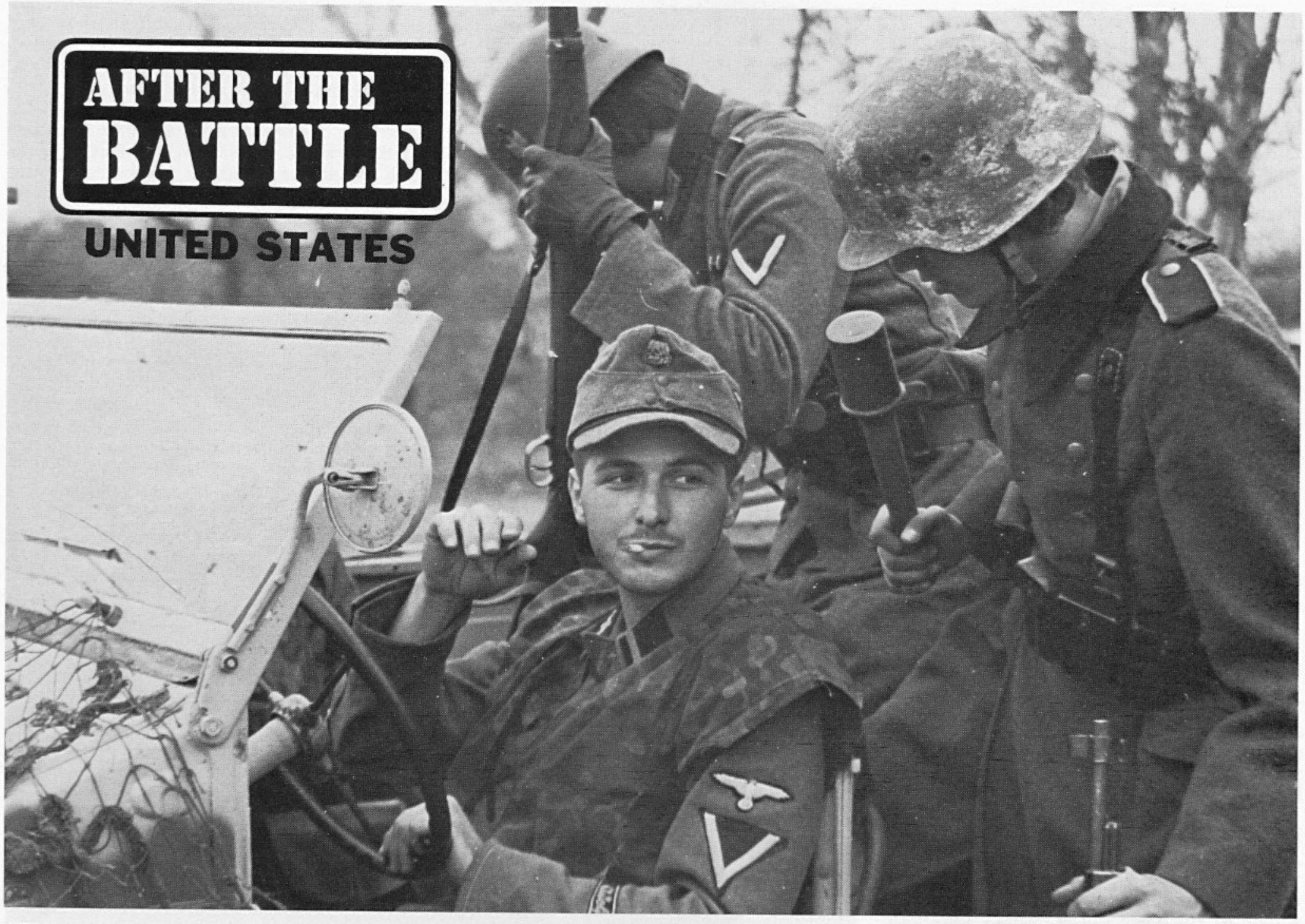
On May 23, 1948 Walter Neusel got his return fight with Max in Hamburg, (fourteen years after the first) and won on points. Max beat his next opponent, a return fight with Draengemeister in Kiel with a knockout in the 9th, but when he lost his last fight against Riedel Vogt in Berlin on October, 31, 1948 on points. Max decided to give up. He had fought 70 fights of which he won 56 (40 by knockout), lost 10 (6 by knockout) and drew 4.

In 1949 Max and Anny moved to Hollenstedt, near Hamburg and opened a mink farm, where they still live. Max has remained true to boxing, however, and acted as boxing referee in Switzerland, Spain, Luxembourg and elsewhere. In 1954, Max was happy to accept an invitation to referee a few fights in Milwaukee and take this opportunity to meet his old opponent and friend Joe Louis at home in Chicago. Max says that this meeting was worth more than any third fight—Joe Louis v. Max Schmeling.

In 1954 Max met Mr. Jim Farley, one-time Head of the New York Boxing Commission, later US Minister of Post & Mail and President of Coca Cola, and nowadays Max is the successful director of a soft drinks company in Hamburg.

In the summer of 1975, a Hamburg journalist was looking around an antique shop in Harwich in Essex, England, when he came across Max Schemling's World Champion Certificate, issued on July 3, 1931 by the National Boxing Association of America. This document, which had been missing since 1945, was hurriedly retrieved and, suitably framed, 're-presented' to Max on his 70th birthday in September.

Max with his wife Anny at their Hollenstedt home in West Germany (Horzu).



The World War II Historical Re-enactment Society

A modern touch was given to American Bicentennial observances when, in October 1975, the *World War II Historical Re-enactment Society* fought its first battle in 'Operation Wacht am Rhein' However the location, instead of Central Europe, was an old US Army Ordnance plant near St. Louis in the American Midwest.

'Actors' in the weekend drama were members of the society and other military history buffs, more than a hundred enthusiasts all told, representing Ohio, Illinois, Wisconsin, Tennessee, Pennsylvania and several other states. All appeared at the event in authentic uniforms of the period.

Inside the large registration tent near the entrance of the U.S. Army Reserve Training Center, Terry Johns, the 25-year-old organizer of the event, handed out blank ammunition and C-Rations to participants. This was a war game with a difference!

'These people are all collectors of WW2 gear and they're sticklers for authenticity — there's very little reproduction or Hollywood garbage here,' Johns explained. 'Most of them have come more than a hundred miles and the black Mercedes staff car out there is from Dallas, Texas!'

'With all the other re-enactments going on, we thought it was time to do a World War Two battle,' he added. 'After all, a lot of veterans of that war are still around and why should you wait until they're gone to give them a pat on the back for what they did?'

Johns, dressed as a member of one of Hitler's SS units, handed a box of 30 calibre blanks to Norm Abookire, a college student from Cleveland, Ohio, wearing the uniform of a typical U.S. soldier.

'This is the way to have a war,' Abookire commented. 'Nobody gets hurt and when its all over we go home, take the uniforms off and

Top: As a driver from the Adolf Hitler Division, battle co-ordinator Terry Johns, stops his VW type 82 to give two Wehrmacht soldiers a lift (A. J. Petschonek). Above: A determined 'GI', prepares for the next German assault (E. R. Maples Co).

talk about the crazy things we did. I'm studying 19th Century American and British history and there is a kind of odd fascination about war, I think. Let's face it: war is not fun, but there is a peculiar excitement about the uniforms and equipment that's hard to explain.'

'Well, I suspect that my mother think's I'm a bit touched,' Abookire concedes. 'But, my neighbors think it's great and they want to see every piece of gear as I get it. The fact is, though, that there are a lot of intelligent, level-headed people here. They know how to handle firearms safely and they are experts on the period they study and collect. We're acting out history.'

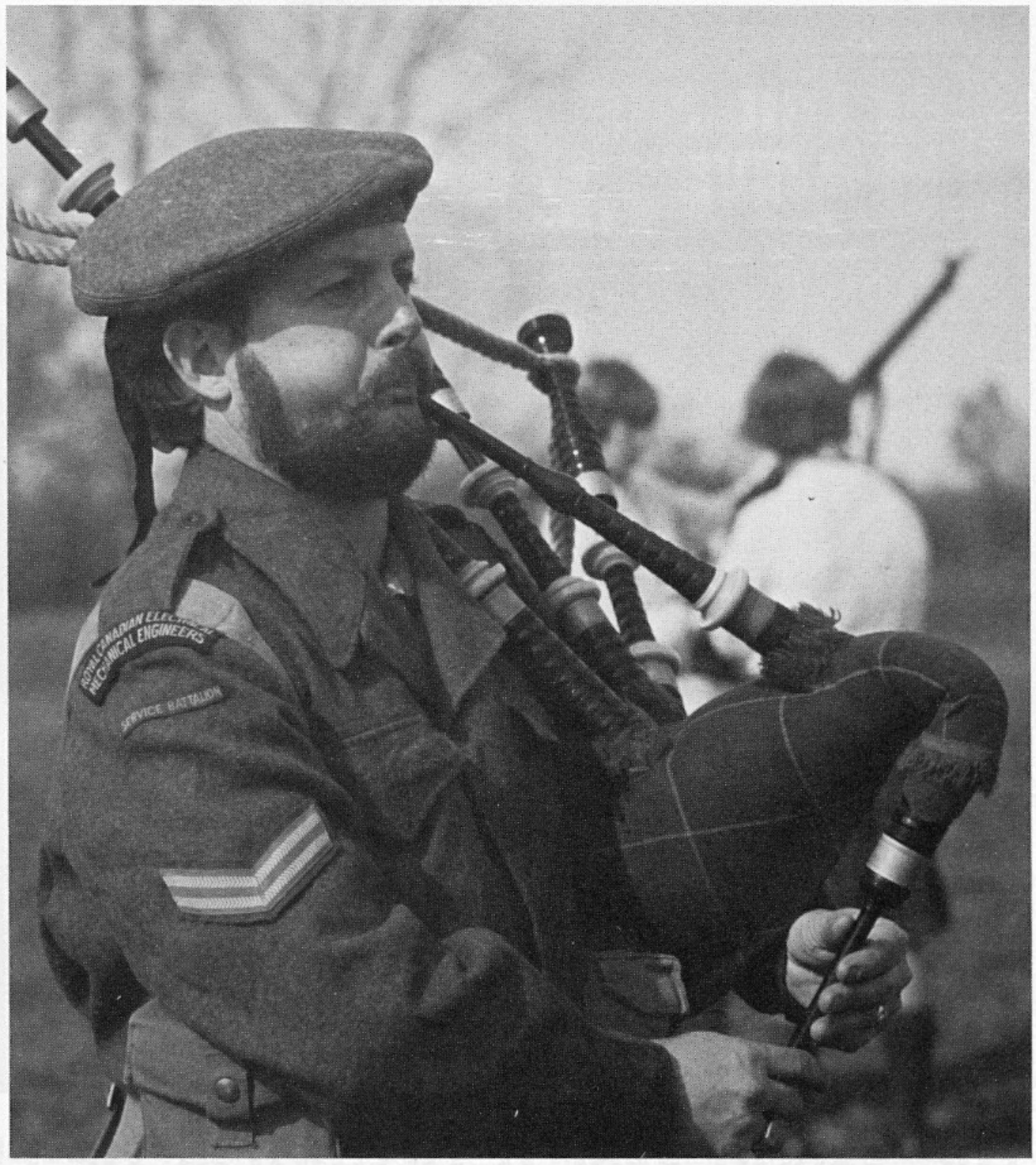
Also waiting to collect his ammunition is co-host of the event, Fred Poddig of Edwardsville, Illinois, in a camouflage Waffen-SS smock over his black Panzer uniform. The complete ensemble cost Poddig about $900, he admits, including the replica Schmeisser machine gun he carries.

'People ask me why I risk ruining an expensive outfit like this running around in the woods, but this is what I got the stuff for — this is the payoff. Why have it if you can't enjoy it?'

'The main thing about these battles,' Poddig added, 'is that enthusiasm is growing for our hobby. The whole purpose of forming the *World War II Historical Re-enactment Society* is to gather information and make it available, not only for our October battle here, but to anyone who would like to stage one in their area. Hopefully in a few years, our hobby will grow to the point where we will have many well organized groups from other areas putting on battles across the country.'

However war games mean different things to different people and a case in point is Pete Geery, a bagpiper in the fifteen-strong 'Meeting of the Waters' pipe band from St. Louis County. Dressed in bright kilts and battledress, topped off with a tam-o-shanter, Geery stands drinking a last cup of tea before the exercises begin.

'We've never had an opportunity to pipe anyone into battle before,' Geery explains with a trace of a Scots burr in his voice. 'And



Above: Pete Geery, a member of the 'Meeting of the Waters' pipe band warms up his bagpipes in preparation for the Canadian advance (E. R. Maples Co). Below: Mr. Maples' $7,500 Universal Carrier — the star attraction of the show (E. R. Maples Co).

that's really why pipers were originally made a part of some British Army units: to provide military music and lead soldiers into battle. We figure this is our big chance.'

Bursting with pride is one grey-haired German non-commissioned officer. 'I sent for this 1943 Volkswagen Kubelwagen, at a cost of $2,100 from Germany,' says Art Obermeyer. 'It arrived in the United States just days before the game, and I was fortunate to get it operational in the nick of time.'

'Thirty years ago I would have never dreamed something like this would have ever come to pass,' Art adds. 'In 1945 I was a staff sergeant with the US 14th Armored Division in Europe. I thought I would like to find out what it was like to have been on the "other side of the hill". There are a couple of us real life veterans of the Second World War participating here today.'

A column of jack-booted German infantry marches smartly up the road while, in the distance, a few test rounds of blank ammunition are fired and dummy hand grenades produce loud bangs and huge clouds of white smoke.

A group of newly-arrived 'GIs' pause to let the 'Nazis' march by before heading for the coffee and hot dog stand. There is a marked lack of animosity between the two groups of men and, instead of shots, they exchange only good-natured banter.

A Universal Carrier, complete with fully operational .30 calibre machine gun and .55 inch Boys' anti-tank rifle, was the star attraction of the Allied motorized equipment. The vehicle was brought all the way from Nashville, Tennessee by Mr. E. R. Maples. 'It cost me over $7,500 by the time I completed the restoration work.' 'I currently own nineteen armored fighting vehicles including several half-tracks and an M3 Stuart tank. I am planning to start a museum eventually.

Joe Drennon of the Historic Military Museum of Missouri was there with his M3 half-track and M20 armored car. 'I guess I was bitten by the bug when I was a small boy during the war. I used to watch the tanks and trucks being moved on railcars and played war with my brother.' Joe also owns a Sherman tank, jeeps, command cars, trucks, and an amphibious DUKW.

Host to all this military might was Lieutenant-Colonel John F. Williams, Jr., commanding officer of the 1138th Combat Engineers of the Missouri Army National Guard. The training center is home to Colonel Williams' unit and his men have provided a static display of armoured personnel carriers, bulldozers and portable bridges. The event was a kind of sentimental journey for the Colonel too, since, as the rows of ribbons on his uniform witnessed, he served in the ETO and saw the real-life counterparts of the men and equipment now assembling for the re-enactment around him.

'This is great, a thing of this nature — especially on this Veteran's Day weekend,' he said. 'I missed the last one, a Civil War re-enactment, because we were out on training manoeuvres. That one would have been very interesting for me because the 1138th was first organized in 1832 as the First Missouri Brigade of the Confederate States of America. We were sort of on the other side of the fence, you might say.'

'Why did I come here? To play soldier, it's as simple as that,' Larry Nowak from Milwaukee stated. Larry is sweating freely under the weight of his MG 34 machine gun and belts of ammo. 'They said I look like a German, so I'm kind of type-cast, but I like it and here I am.' Shouldering his weapon and checking his potato masher grenades, he moves off to join his platoon.

As the battle started, Dale Rinehard flew his 1942 L3 Observation plane over the German lines. The Germans blasted away at the intruder with all weapons. Dale simulated being hit by pulling the pins of smoke grenades attached to the landing gear and putting the plane into a stall and then a tail spin. It was quite breath-taking as he pulled out at tree top level above the spectators and disappeared.

Above: Art Obermeyer, wearing the uniform of a German NCO, driving his 1943 Kubelwagen—in the background, a World War II narrow gauge US Army railway wagon (E. R. Maples Co).

The defending Allies had their left and right flanks pushed back by the forward Wehrmacht units. An American General arrived at this point to take over command of the shaken troops. Both sides appeared to be regrouping for the next round.

A highlight of the re-enactment was the comical appearance of a Japanese KATE torpedo bomber. The plane was flown by its owner, Al Stix and had been one which was used in the filming of the film, 'TORA, TORA, TORA", It made several strafing runs on the Allied positions with all machine guns blazing away. Everyone wondered if they were going to see the plane launch a torpedo at one of the half-tracks!

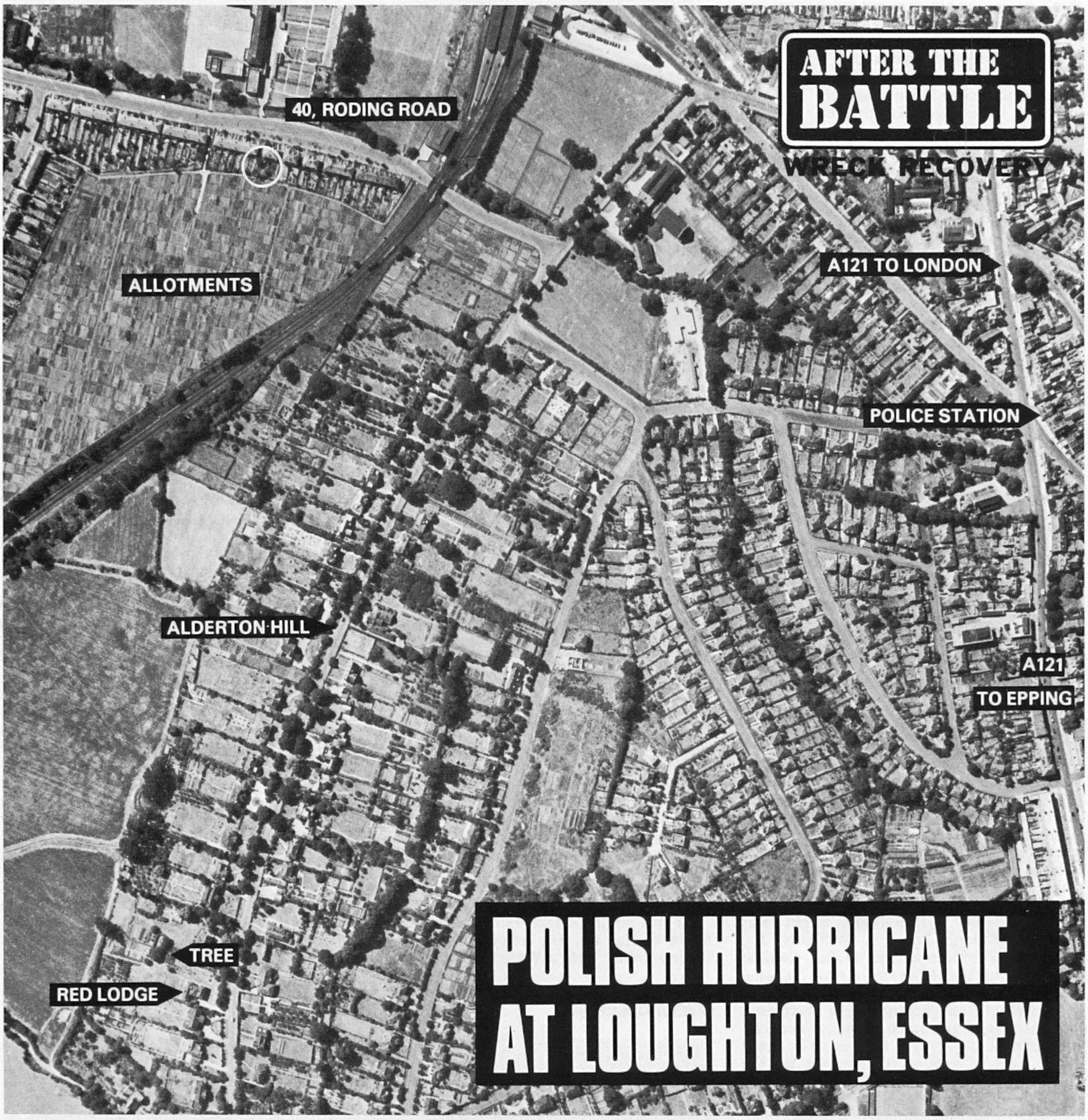
At this point German reinforcements were heard moving up. The Americans braced for the inevitable. Then a Waffen-SS detachment hit the far right flank. This assault was defeated by the timely arrival of Canadian reinforcements.

Thanks to the simplicity of the scenario and coordination contributed by the radio communications provided by the Civil Air Patrol, the sham battle was very successful and drew much applause from the spectators. Two days later, men and 15,000 rounds of ammunition exhausted, the battle ground to a close with no harm done.

There was no doubt as to the success of the weekend. There are already plans to hold a second battle on October 23/24, 1976 at the Training Centre at Weldon Spring, Missouri. It is hoped to include some tanks plus more transport for the opposing armies.

American readers interested in joining and participating, should contact the *WORLD WAR II HISTORICAL RE-ENACTMENT SOCIETY*, 1780 Clover Lane, Florissant, Missouri, 63031. U.S.A. Membership fee is $15,00 which is used to cover the expense of ammunition and meals.

Crewmen of an M20 armoured utility car take a break behind a tree line to avoid detection (Arthur Obermeyer).



September 7, 1940, a gloriously fine Saturday, was to mark the beginning of a new stage in the German air attack on England; a switch, on Hitler's orders, for the start of reprisal raids against London.

Reichmarschall Herman Goering arrived at Cap Griz Nez in his special train to personally supervise the onslaught. It was not until late in the day that aircraft from Luftflotten 2 in northern France set course for London, watched by the Reichmarschall and his entourage on the cliffs below.

At 4.00 p.m., several formations of twenty-plus were picked up by British radar stations but, instead of splitting up when they crossed the coast for the expected airfield attacks, they continued to mass and were joined by aircraft of Luftflotten 3 from their airfields deep in France. Gradually it was realised at Fighter Command HQ at Bentley Priory that this was no ordinary raid. Over 300 bombers escorted by 600 fighters, stepped in layers, crossed the English coast in two waves. The fighter screen adopted new tactics, operating at 16,000-20,000 feet as a close escort for the bombers which headed straight for London.

The air raid warning was sounded at 4.15 p.m. At No. 40 Roding Road, Loughton, on the north-east outskirts of London, Mr. L. Brockwell, an architect, shepherded his wife and mother-in-law, Mrs. Emily Gurden, into the garden shelter he had designed and constructed himself. Just ten yards from the back door, it had a roof and base of reinforced concrete with sides built of brick.

Ten minutes later, twenty miles away at Northolt aerodrome in north-west London, No. 303 'Kosciuszko' Squadron were scrambled. Eleven Polish pilots, only recently committed to battle, took off in their Hurricanes led by Flying Officer Paszkowski.

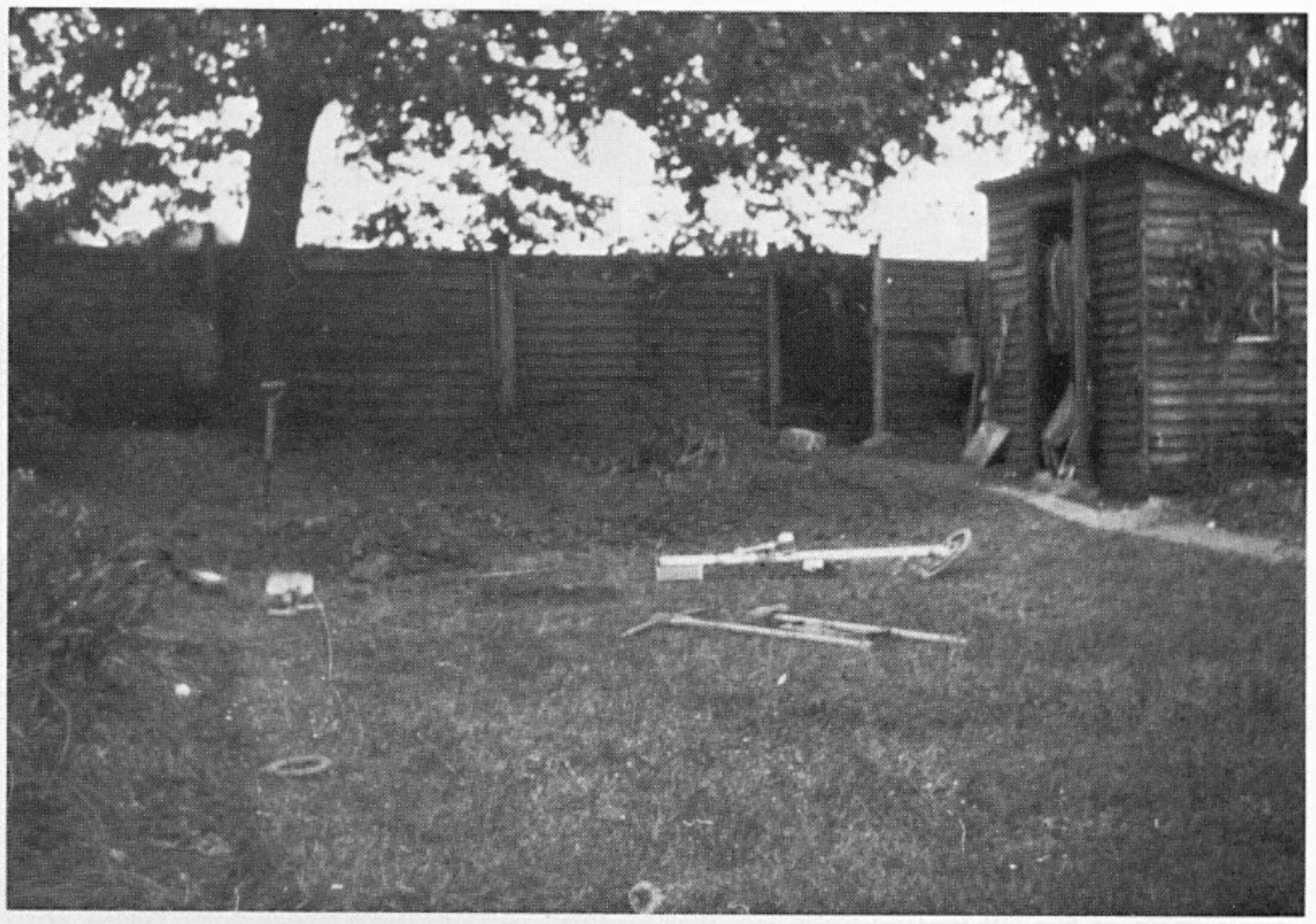
At 4.40 p.m. they made contact with a formation of forty Dornier 215s returning across Essex from the capital. Flying in the leading section was Flying Officer Marian Pisarek who had joined 303 Squadron on its formation on August 21, barely three weeks earlier. Rapidly overhauling the enemy formation, Flying Officer Pisarek suddenly found his two companions had turned sharply to starboard to attack the end pair of Dorniers one of which burst into flames.

'That left two of our planes and one Dornier and therefore nothing for me', recorded Pisarek later, 'but below us there was a fight in progress and I decided to join it. I soon had before me an aeroplane with a swastika on its tail. With a height advantage there was no difficulty in making the attack'.

Watching from the ground, Loughton Fire Brigade Chief Ernie Rule, saw a Hurricane make a diving attack on a Messerschmitt 109 setting it on fire only to immediately fall victim to another Messerschmitt.

'I had time to notice the flames issuing from the Me109,' continued Pisarek, 'when I, myself, received a burst from behind and my Hurricane started to smoke heavily, going into a steep dive.'

Ron Moulton, watching the fight from York Hill, saw the Hurricane pull out of its dive and head for Buckhurst Hill as the pilot tried to escape. The aircraft then rolled to an inverted position and, with the pilot half hanging out of the cockpit, described a turning descent which took it in an arc over Staples Road, Forest Road and over the A121, at which point the pilot fell away at about 1500 ft. A



Left: Flying Officer Marian Pisarek photographed in October 1940 after his escape from the Hurricane (IWM). Above: The back garden of No 40, Roding Road, Loughton. There was no sign to mark either the air raid shelter or the last resting place of the Hurricane.

cheer went up all over Loughton from the watching villagers, convinced that this was a German machine.

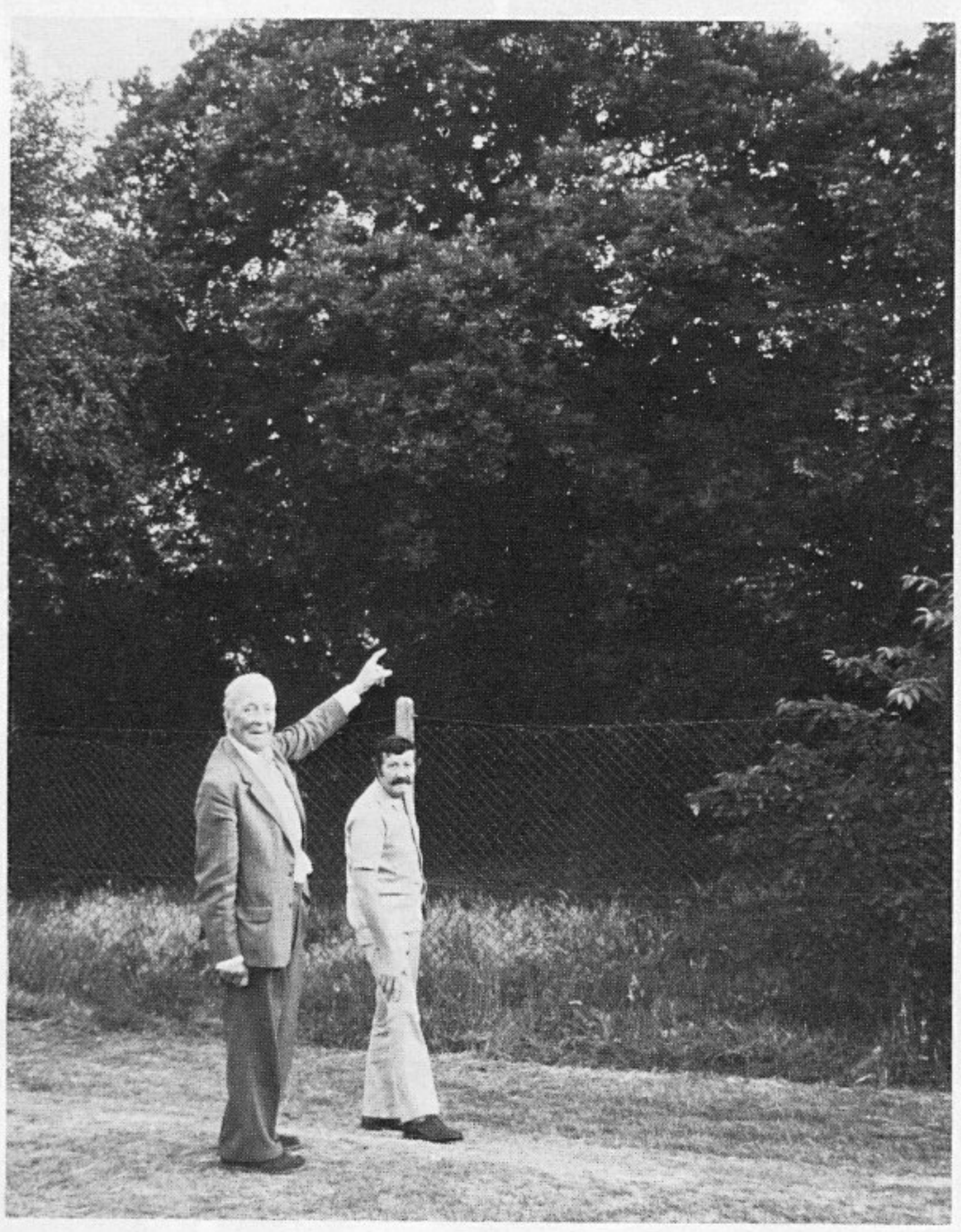
'I released the belts and slipped off the helmet', recorded Pisarek, 'whilst trying to get the plane away from houses and into the open spaces but the Hurricane was already past the vertical line and I myself literally ejected from the cockpit'.

The Hurricane, now in its death dive, headed towards Roding Road where it smashed inverted into the back lawn of No. 40, burying itself beneath the air raid bunker in which the Brockwell family were sheltering. With a roar the fuel tanks exploded and blazing high octane petrol cascaded into the shelter. A cheer went up all over Loughton from the watching villagers, oblivious that this was not a German machine crashing.

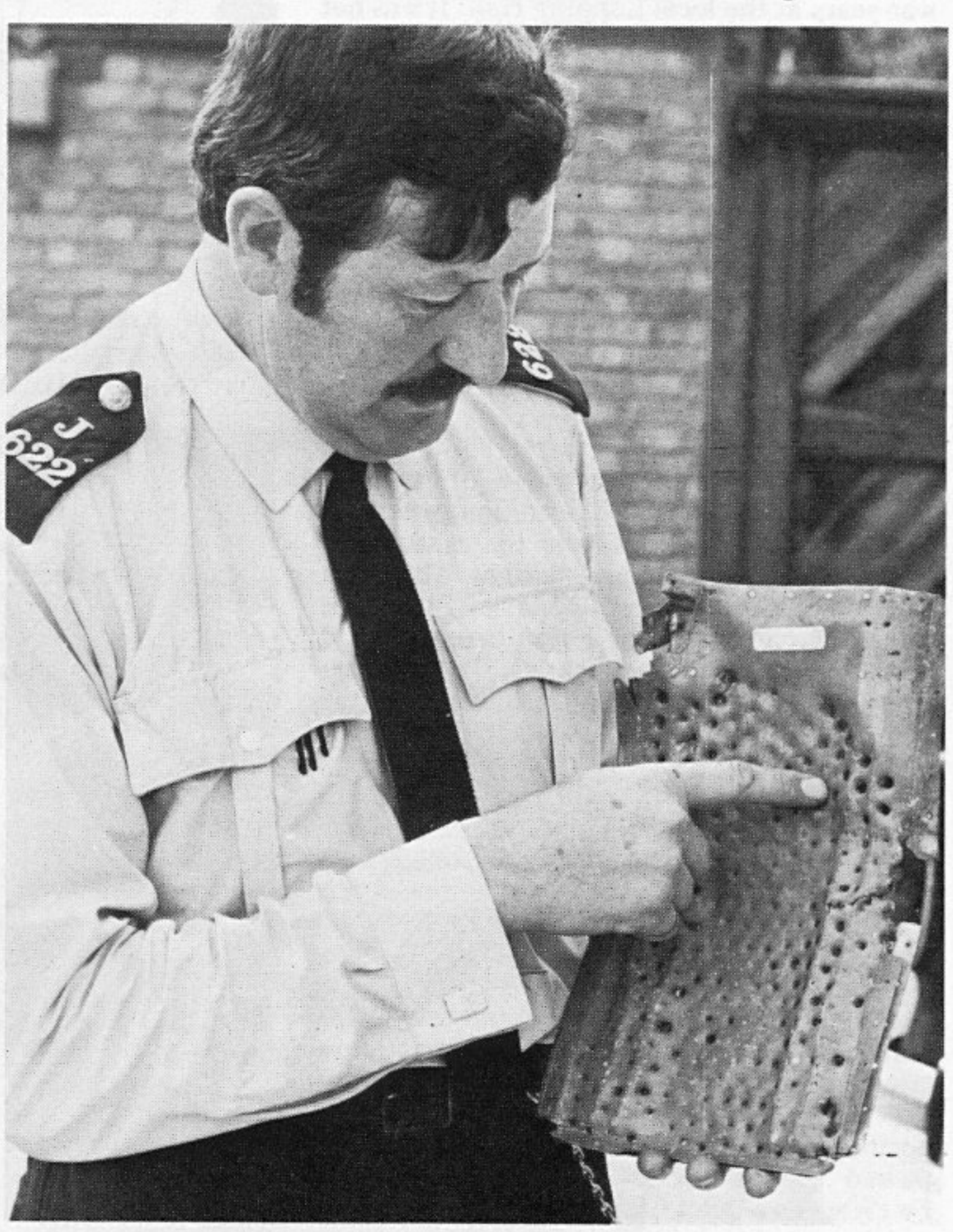
Constable Laurie Perigo was first on the scene, and was followed by Walter Bullen with a rescue team within two minutes. Fighting their way through the smoke, flames and exploding ammunition they strove to reach the shelter in the forlorn hope that someone could be saved. When they finally doused the flames, they found that one side of the shelter had collapsed bringing down the roof. Mr. and Mrs. Brockwell had been killed instantly by the blast and Mrs. Gurden, further inside the shelter, had been burnt to death.

Meanwhile Flying Officer Pisarek was drifting serenely across the allotments towards Alderton Hill on his parachute. At No. 61, Mr. and Mrs. Tibble were excitedly watching the battle through binoculars. Next door, at the Red Lodge, Charles Cranwell, an ex-RNAS WWI veteran but now a private in the Home Guard, stood watching in the garden. When Mr. Tibble shouted that a pilot had baled out and was drifting their way, Charles Cranwell ran indoors for his Lee Enfield. Loading it with a five round clip he dashed outside just in time to see the pilot become entangled in a knarled old oak tree in the back garden.

Swinging himself from side to side the pilot released his harness and climbed to the ground to find himself looking down the



Ex-Home Guard Charles Cranwell points out the oak tree in the back garden of Red Lodge to Wilf Nichol, where he 'captured' Flying Officer Pisarek after his parachute landing.



Constable Wilf Nichol shows the side of the ammunition box from the Hurricane, perforated by exploding ammunition in the fire, at the Loughton Police Station Open Day in 1971.

wrong end of a rifle. Pisarek offered his identity card and then calmly took out a comb to neaten his hair. It was only then that he realised he had lost one of his shoes which he thought must have probably caught against some lever in the cockpit.

Charles Cranwell had no sooner begun to realise that the pilot might not be a German after all when the garden became alive with police, soldiers and some hostile citizens.

Being tall, blonde and unable to speak much English, it was presumed he was a German and he was promptly hustled to Loughton Police Station. There, after thorough questioning, his identity was established. Before he left the station, news arrived of the deaths in Roding Road. Flying Officer Pisarek was extremely distressed.

Thirty years passed and the incident was forgotten in Loughton until the facts were uncovered by another policeman—an enthusiastic amateur historian—Constable Wilf Nichol. Tracking down the various eye witnesses and contacting the Polish Air Force Association led to parts of the Hurricane being put on display at the opening of the new Loughton Police Station (on the site of the old one) in 1971. PC Nichol even went to see the new owners of No. 40 Roding Road but they were reluctant to discuss the crash or show him the garden.

There the matter rested until 1976, when Tony Graves and John Tickner, of the London Air Museum, read about the crash in a Polish Squadron history. By now No. 40 had changed hands and the new owners, Mr. and Mrs. Paul Pinagli, were very interested to learn what had happened years ago in their small, suburban back-garden, firstly from Wilf Nichol, who became a firm friend, and later from Tony Graves.

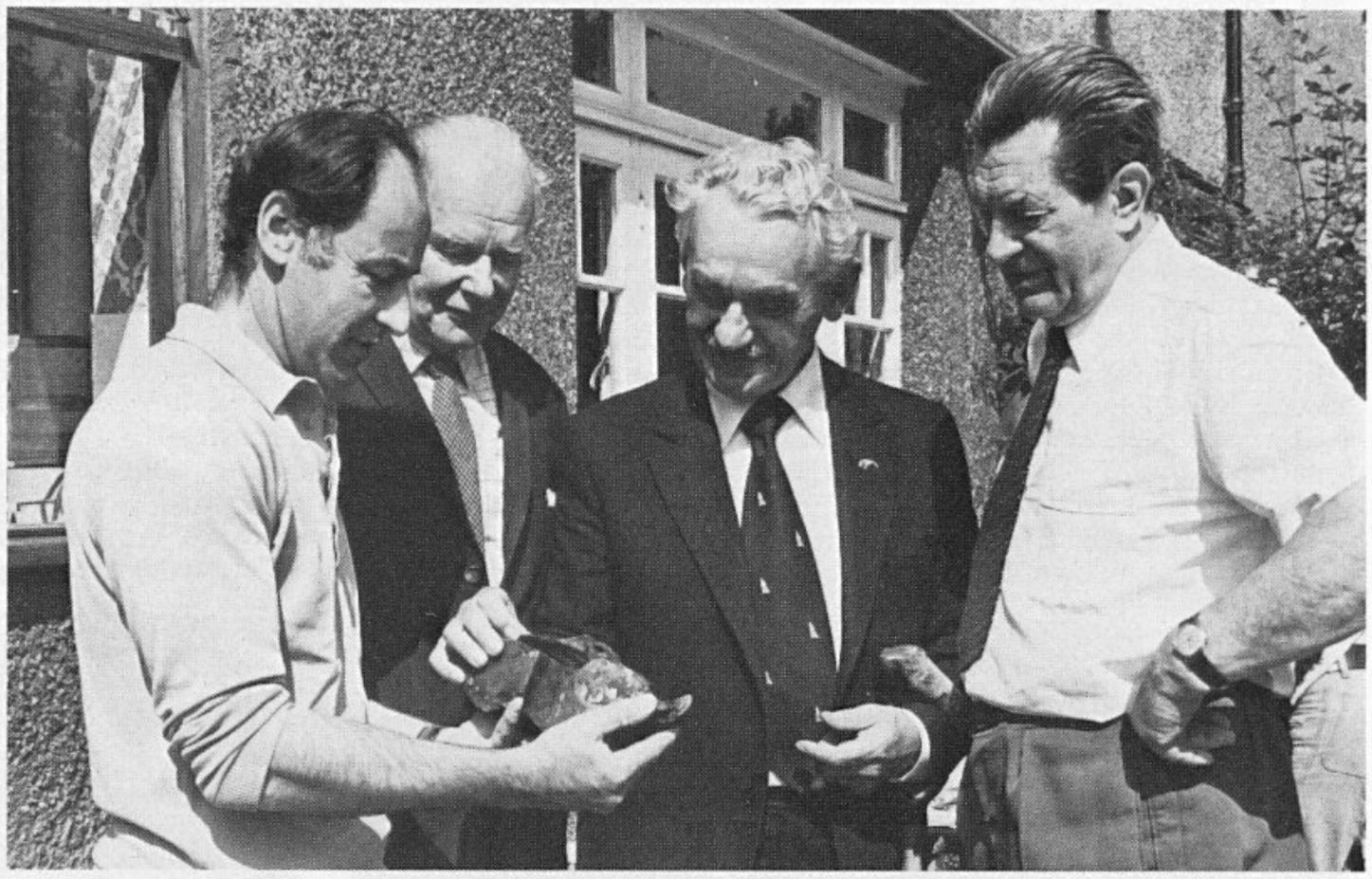
At the time, the surface wreckage of the Hurricane had been taken to the local council yard in Old Station Road, Loughton, to await collection by the RAF. One wing was found several gardens away and two of the Browning machine guns were displayed throughout the war years at the local Lopping Hall. It was not known exactly what remained below the ground as even the remains of the air raid shelter had been removed after the crash.

Bravely, Mr. Pinagli gave permission for the London Air Museum team to move in and, on May 29, excavations began. To the editor's knowledge this is a unique aircraft recovery. Many machines are recovered from fields, moors and open land but it needs a very generous person indeed to agree to having a mechanical excavator dig up his back garden!

Over the course of three Saturdays, using hand tools at first, the complete wreckage forward of the aerial was recovered. It was on the last Saturday, in the presence of members of the Polish Air Force Association, when the engine was to be lifted from the excavation, that the greatest find came to light. The black shoe which had been lost by Marian Pisarek as he left the aircraft, was found cased in mud and entangled in the wreckage. The remains are now on view on Sundays at the home of the London Air Museum at 139 North Cray Road, Bexley, Kent.

Mr. Brockwell, his wife and her mother were all buried in Loughton Cemetery. Marian Pisarek went on to fly 47 sorties with 303 Squadron during which time he shot down four enemy aircraft. On January 23, 1941, he was made commander of No. 315 'Deblin' Squadron. He was promoted to Wing Commander on April 18, 1942 and took command of the Northolt Wing. Just eleven days later, he took off on his last mission. Leading the Wing on an operation over Desvres in northern France on April 29, they were attacked by a superior force of Me109s and Fw190s. Two pilots failed to return—one of which was Marian Pisarek. His body was never found; neither was the crash and today no memorial or inscription remains to remember his passing.

Above: After working for two weekends with hand shovels, Tony Graves (right) and John Tickner (left) bring in the heavy stuff (Guardian).



Above: Marian Pisarek's shoe found in the wreckage, being examined by officers of the Polish Air Force Association, Mr. Jaworski (second from left) and Mr. Z. W. Bienkowski (third from left) (Guardian).

The unmarked grave (No. 774) at Loughton Burial Ground where Mr. and Mrs. Brockwell and Mrs. Gurden lie buried together.

AFTER THE BATTLE

PRESERVATION

Royal Artillery Quad

The Quad is handed over by Ronald Stevenson to Captain Philip Ventham, the Assistant Senior Instructor at the D & M School RA Wing at Bovington, on January 15, 1976.

There can be few soldiers who served on the various fronts during the war who did not have cause at one time or another to thank the timely arrival of the 25-pounder guns and detachments in their ubiquitous Quads.

The Quad stemmed from a specification, issued by the War Office in April 1938, for a 4 x 4 Field Artillery Tractor to tow the newly developed 25-pdr gun-howitzer. The requirements for this vehicle were:

(a) It should have a short wheelbase and good ground clearance to improve its cross-country manoeuvrability.
(b) The tractor should be capable of carrying at least 96 rounds of ammunition and other gun stores.
(c) The vehicle should be capable of accommodating the gun detachment of six.
(d) The traversing platform of the gun should be carried on the roof of the tractor in such a way that it could be removed quickly and easily when the gun came into action.
(e) The driver should be positioned as far forward as possible to improve his visibility.

A vehicle designed by Guy Motors to meet those requirements was the first of a long series of vehicles used as gun tractors throughout the Second World War and for many years after. Five versions of the Quad were produced by the following manufacturers:

Guy Motors Ltd.
The Morris Commercial Co. Ltd.
The Karrier Co. Ltd.
The Ford Motor Corporation of Canada.
The General Motors Corporation of Canada.

After 1941, Canada rapidly became the primary producer of military vehicles for use by the British and Commonwealth armies. The production of Canadian built Quads during the war totalled 22,891 compared with 5,000 produced by the three British companies.

Late in 1975, Captain P. R. Ventham, the Assistant Senior Instructor at the Driving and Maintenance School, Royal Artillery Wing at Bovington Camp in Dorset, decided it would be fitting for a Quad to be preserved at the Camp. It would also be used to raise funds at fetes and shows for the Royal Artillery Charitable Fund, whose facilities are still providing for numerous disabled Gunners and their families.

With a preference for an early model, a suitable vehicle manufactured in 1940 proved to be a Morris Commercial C8 Mk. I which a Mr. Ronald Stevenson of Slough had discovered in store in an Ordnance depot in Hong Kong and had shipped back to England in the early 70s.

After Captain Ventham discovered that Stevenson was prepared to sell, he decided to circularise every regiment and old comrades' association in the Royal Artillery to raise the cash to purchase the vehicle. Within two weeks, more than enough money had been donated to purchase the vehicle; subsequently sufficient was received to pay for its restoration as well.

Although Mr. Stevenson had begun to restore the Quad himself, after its arrival at Bovington in January 1976, 18 Command Workshops took over. During the next four months the Quad was painstakingly stripped and renovated to ex-factory condition.

Meanwhile, after Captain Ventham was posted, Major David Pollock took over the search for a 25-pdr gun. The limber had previously been given on permanent loan to the RA Wing by Brian Bashall of Dunsford Land-Rovers; however, a Mk I version of the 25 pounder (the correct vintage to match the vehicle) was a different matter.

Approximately 12,000 Mk II 25-pdrs had been built, with muzzle brakes fitted to those manufactured after 1943. Mk Is were an assortment of various conversions based on the pre-war 18-pdrs. After a long search of depots and stores one was finally found in the charge of the Combined Cadet Force at Wrekin College in Shropshire. It was made up of a Mk I carriage and recoil system and a Mk II barrel without muzzle brake and was first issued to the Royal Artillery on December 11, 1941. The CCF were only too pleased to exchange this for a later Mk II model, thus solving the problem admirably.

The Quad, limber and gun, which Major Pollock says must be the only completely original, matched trio anywhere in the world, was paraded for us to photograph as soon as restoration was finished in June 1976.

Major Pollock and Staff-Sergeant Coombs (centre) supervise the positioning of the Mk. I 25-pdr gun for our centre-page photograph.

AFTER THE BATTLE

IT HAPPENED HERE

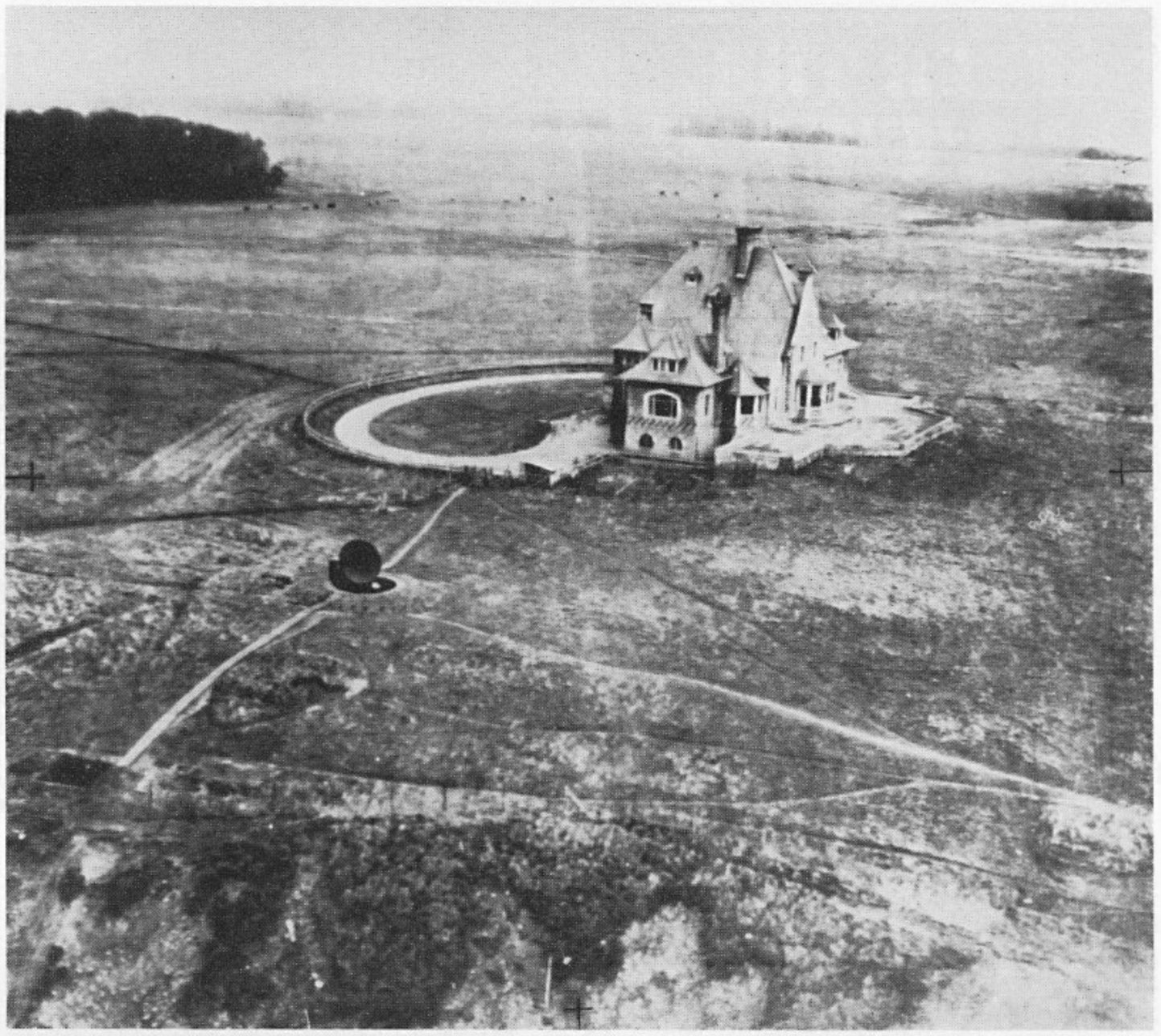
The Bruneval Raid

By the spring of 1941, the existence of an effective German early-warning radar network called *Freya*, operating on 125 megacycles, was accepted by British scientists. By the end of October, the locations of twenty-seven 'radio direction finding' stations had been plotted from Bodo in Norway to Bordeaux in France. At the same time, different radar signals of 570 megacycles had been picked up but the new device defied all attempts to locate it.

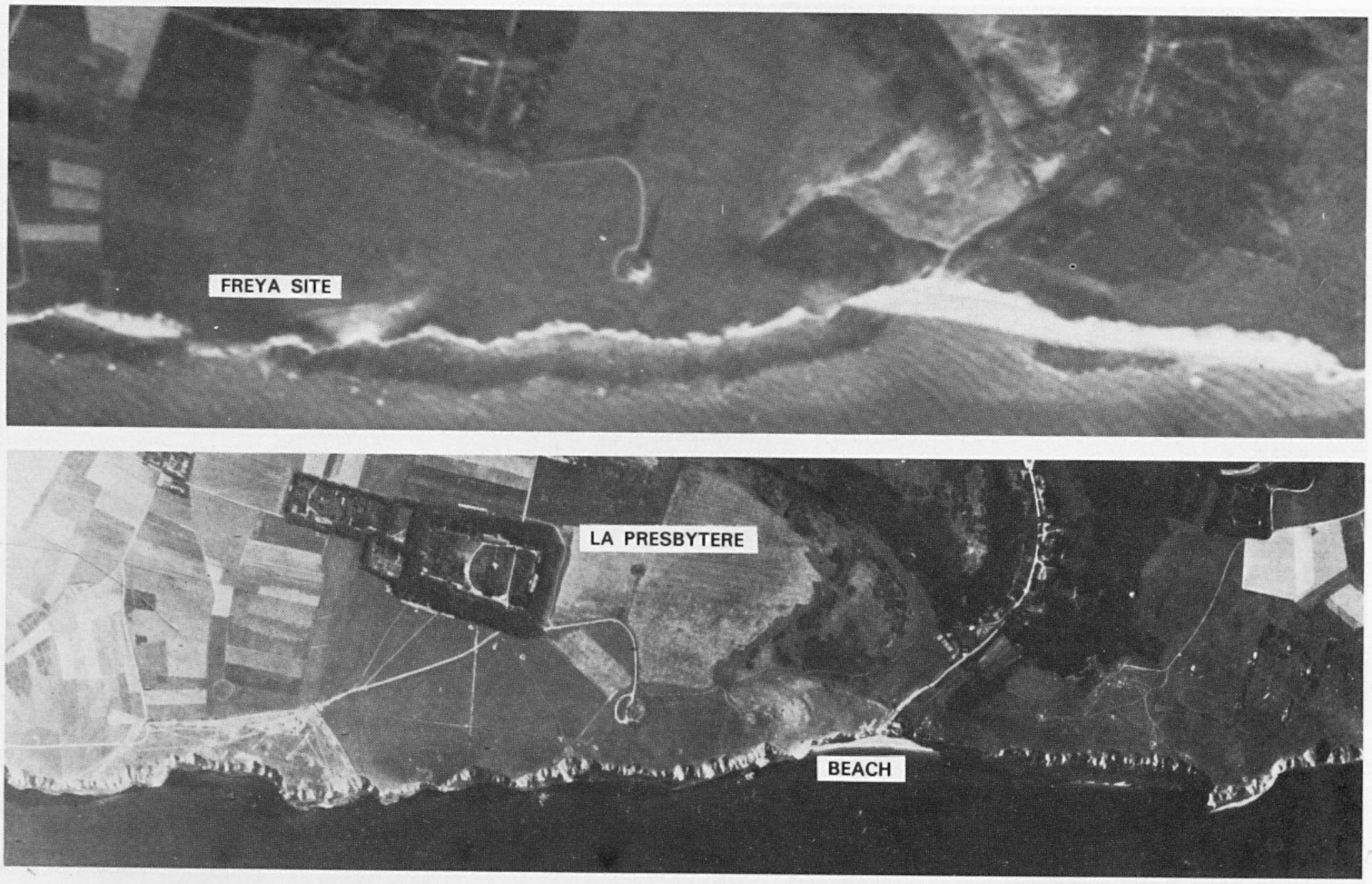
However late in November 1941, Dr. Charles Frank, a physicist on the staff of Dr. R. V. Jones (a brilliant scientist attached to the Air Ministry Directorate of Intelligence), was examining a medium-level photograph of the *Freya* station at Bruneval on the northern coast of France near Le Havre, when he noticed that a track had been trodden out along the cliff-edge: it ran from the *Freya* aerials towards a large house which seemed to be some sort of headquarters building. Just before it reached the building, the track swung round to the right, and ended at a small black object about half-way between the house and the cliff, with its sheer drop to the sea below. Somebody had considered it worth his while to tread out a path from the main radar station to this object. Could it be that the black object played some part in the working of the *Freya*?

On December 3, Flight-Lieutenant Tony Hill, a reconnaissance pilot, chanced to visit the photographic interpretation centre at Medmenham in Buckinghamshire. Hill had come to discuss the low-level photography of the German radar sites with Squadron-Leader C. W. F. Wavell, and because Wavell knew of Frank's special interest in the Bruneval radar site, he mentioned the object to Hill.

On the following day, Hill took off in his Spitfire to go and have a look at Bruneval on his own initiative. He swept in low over the cliffs, and was past the emplacement and out over the trees behind it before the startled defenders knew what had happened. On his return, Hill discovered that his camera had failed to function properly. It was a cruel blow. But he had seen the device clearly himself—it looked like 'an electric bowl-fire



Above: One of the two photographs taken by Flight-Lieutenant Tony Hill on December 5, 1941 shows the Wurzburg aerial at Bruneval (IWM). Below: We re-flew the mission on May 15, 1976 and brought back this comparison photograph.



Top: The cliff-top site as it appeared to RAF photo-reconnaissance on June 21, 1940. Construction of the Freya site has just begun. Above: By September 12, 1942, the Freya site was surrounded by a wire barricade (Crown copyright via Keele University).

and about ten feet across'. If Hill was right this was almost certainly the elusive source of the 570-megacycle transmissions.

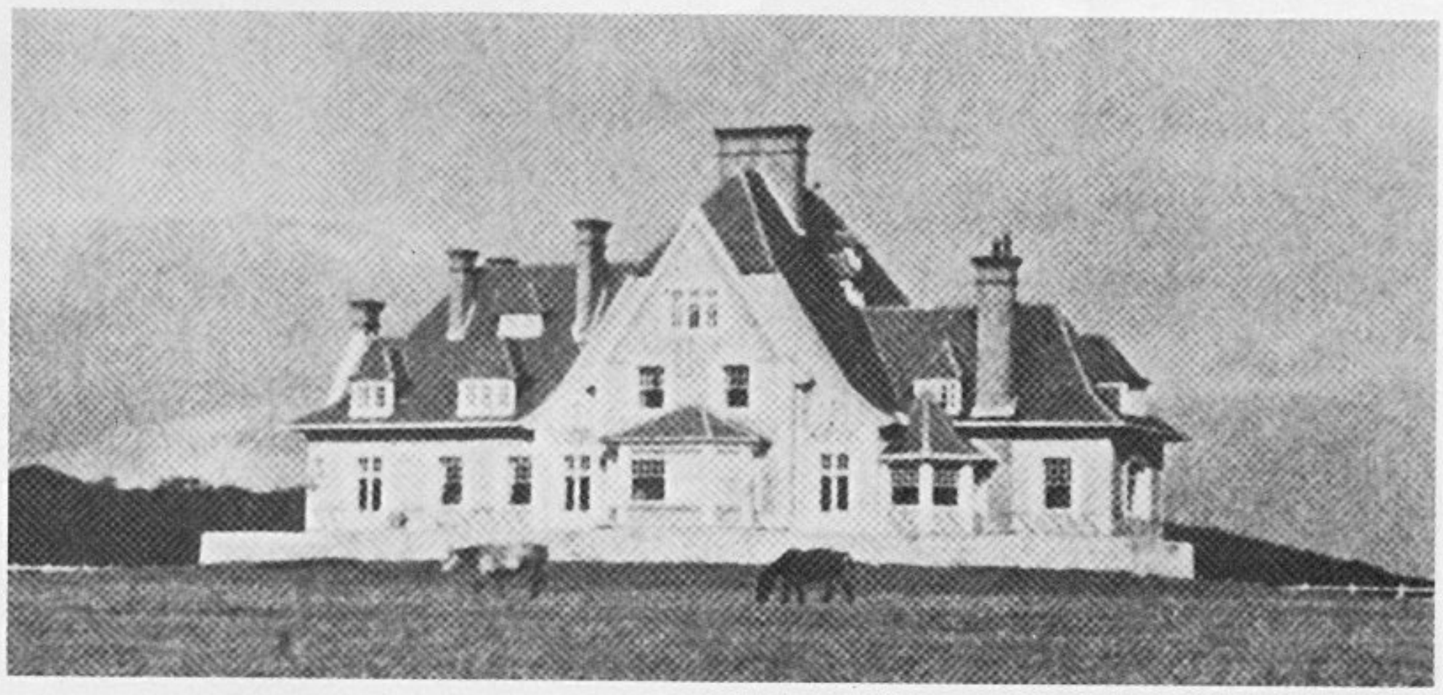
The next day, Flight Lieutenant Hill bravely repeated his performance. The photographs he brought back to England were among the classics of the war: they showed the radar device exactly as he had described it, like an electric bowl-fire about ten feet across.

However a photograph was only half the story; it still remained to be proved that the radar transmitted on 570 megacycles, and until this had been proven, countermeasures could not begin.

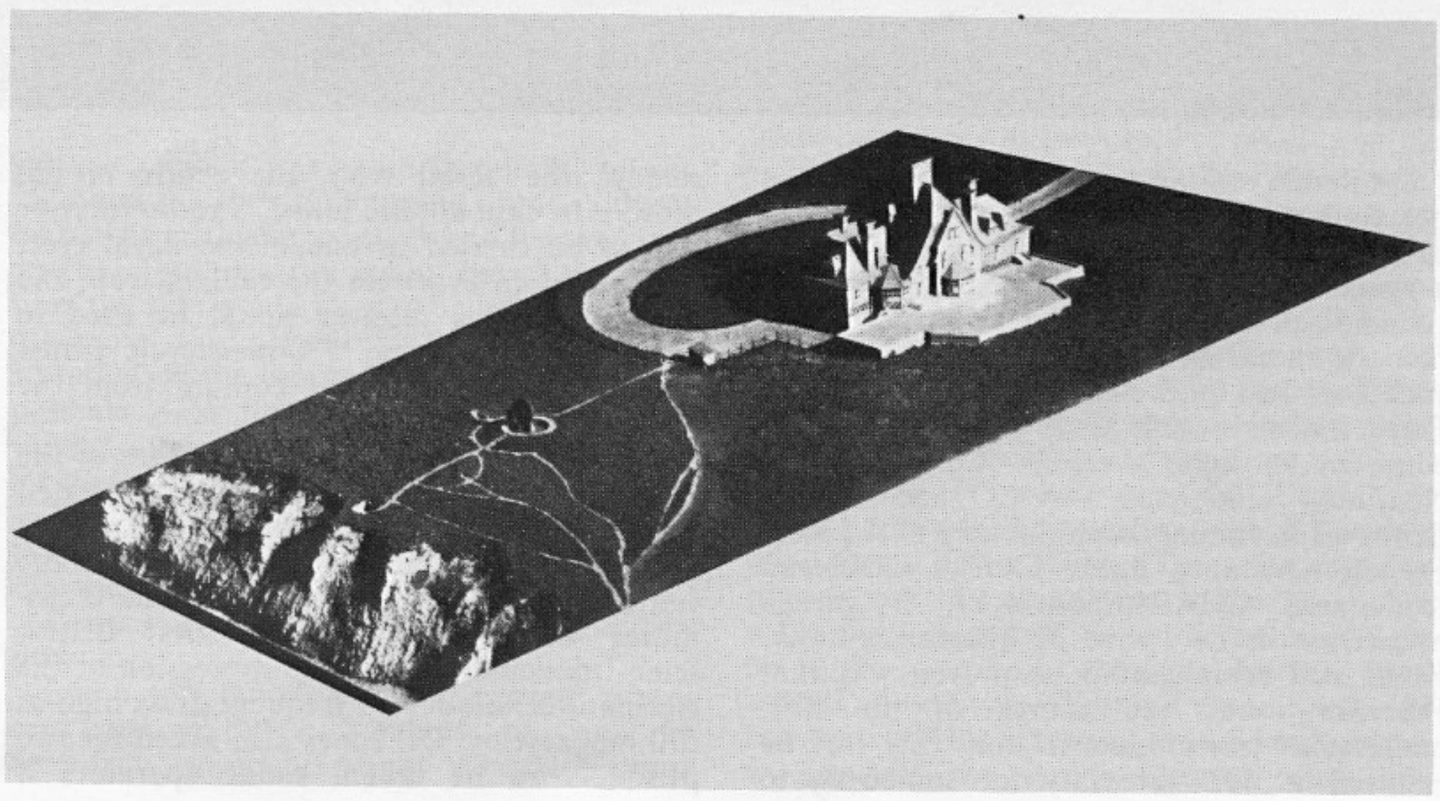
It is difficult to establish who first suggested that it might be a good idea to pilfer the 'bowl-fire' from Bruneval. The notion was such an obvious one — the radar station was within two hundred yards of the coast — that the idea may well have occurred to several people at once. At all events, such an operation was receiving detailed consideration by the beginning of January 1942. It soon became clear that a commando raid from the sea would be doomed to failure: the Bruneval site was situated at the top of high cliffs, and protected by a sizeable German garrison. Even if the raiders could have fought their way to the top of the cliffs without suffering crippling casualties, it was unlikely in the extreme that they could do so before the defenders destroyed the radar set.

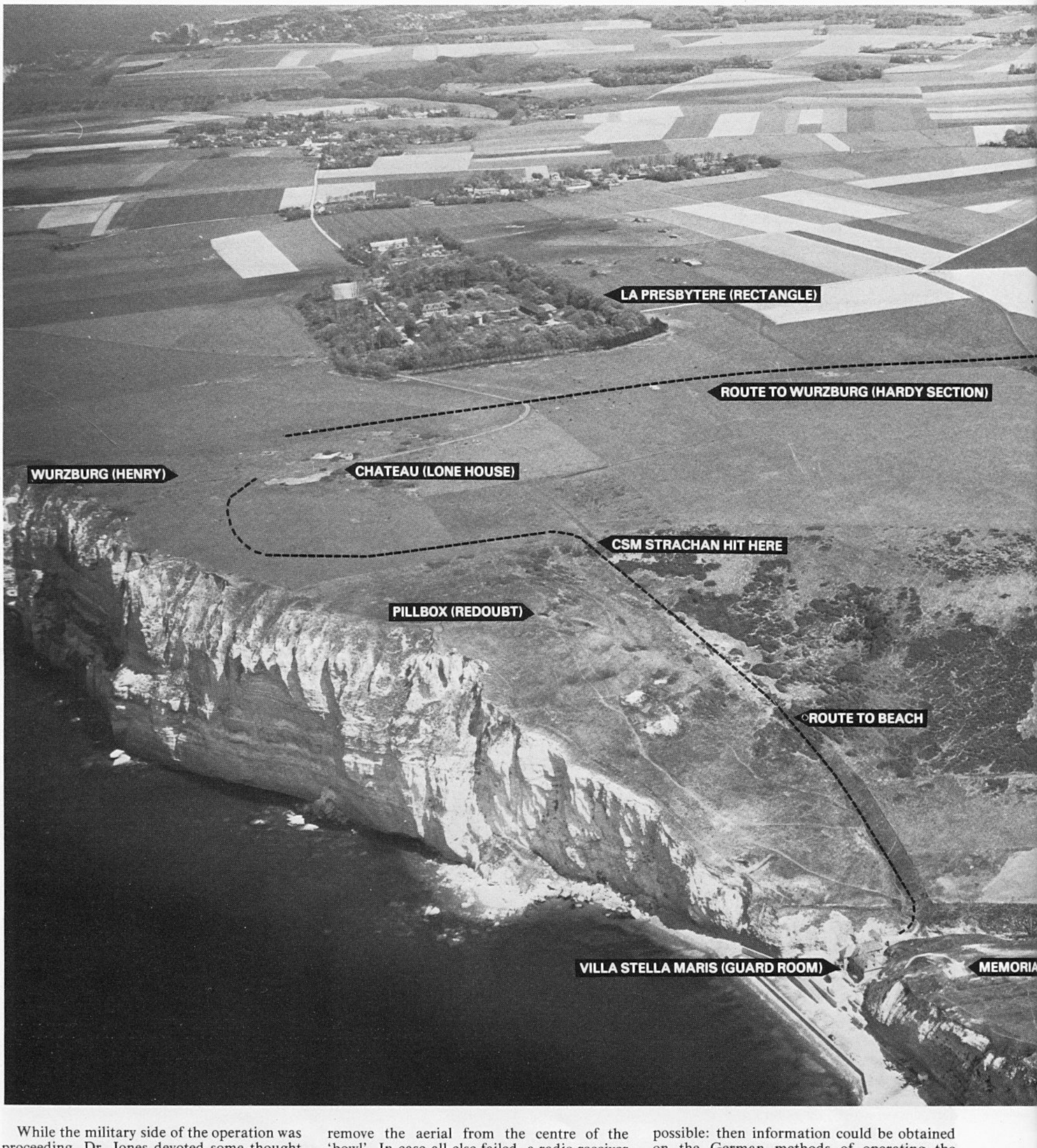
The naval Commodore in charge of Combined Operations, Lord Louis Mountbatten, suggested that parachute troops should be used instead. On January 21, the Chiefs of Staff agreed to this, and ordered that one company of paratroops, sufficient light naval craft to evacuate the force by sea and an operational squadron of Whitley bombers to transport the paratroops be made available. The venture was given the code-name BITING.

'C' Company of the 2nd Parachute Battalion was chosen for the operation. The unit began training for what they were told would be 'a special demonstration exercise, which will probably take place in the Isle of Wight, and the whole of the War Cabinet will be there to see it'.



Above: The chateau, which before the war belonged to a Paris doctor, Professor J. Gosset photographed in 1936. Below: This model which was constructed to brief the attackers before the raid, is now in the Airborne Museum at Aldershot (IWM).





While the military side of the operation was proceeding, Dr. Jones devoted some thought to the points in which Intelligence would have a special interest during the attack. By this time he had learned that the 'bowl-fire' was in fact the radar set called *Wurzburg*, and that such a set had been erected near the Bruneval *Freya* station — this latter confirmation had come in an agent's report. Colonel Andre Neufinck (codename POL) had visited Bruneval in January with the help of the local French resistance agent Charles Chauveau (codename CHARLEMAGNE), a garage proprietor in Le Havre 20 kilometres away. What still remained to be proven was that *Wurzburg* was the source of the 570-megacycle transmissions: for this to be resolved it was necessary for somebody to remove the aerial from the centre of the 'bowl'. In case all else failed, a radio receiver was to be carried in one of the naval craft dispatched to evacuate the raiders from the beach, and this receiver would be used to establish whether any 570-megacycle transmissions could be heard coming from the station.

The next objective was the capture of the *Wurzburg's* receiver and its associated presentation, or 'display', equipment. These would reveal any anti-jamming circuitry the Germans had built into the set. The transmitter was also wanted, so that British scientists could form some impression of the German techniques on frequencies as high as 570 megacycles. Dr. Jones also asked for two prisoners to be taken, radar operators if possible: then information could be obtained on the German methods of operating the radar and aircraft reporting. Finally, as all German signals equipment bore highly informative labels and inspection-stamps, and a great deal of useful general Intelligence could probably be obtained from these, Jones requested that should the various units prove impossible to unlodge, at least their labels should be torn off for him.

The actual dismembering of the *Wurzburg* equipment would be undertaken by seven men of the Royal Engineers, commanded by Lieutenant D. Vernon. There was to be an eighth man in the team who was not a soldier at all: Flight-Sergeant C. W. H. Cox, an R.A.F. radar mechanic, was to go along should any specialist knowledge be required.

The dismantling party was given a British gun-laying radar—the nearest equivalent to the *Wurzburg*—on which to practise, and they demonstrated considerable skill. Vernon and Cox were given a special briefing on the expected character and layout of the German set.

According to the raid's planned time-table, they would have barely half an hour with the apparatus: they had to be trained to make sketches and take photographs of the equipment in this time, and then to dismantle it systematically, beginning at the aerial and working backwards through the receiver to the presentation gear.

By the fourth week in February all was ready, but now the weather intervened. On the evening of the 24th the weather was unsuitable, and it was again unsuitable on the 25th and the 26th. The timing of the raid was extremely critical: the attack had to take place on the night of a full moon, but at the same time the tide would have to be on the rise, for otherwise the assault craft would be left stranded on the beach. The 27th was the last possible date for a month or more. Fortunately the weather forecast was favourable for that evening.

Thus informed, the Commander-in-Chief Portsmouth, Admiral Sir William James, signalled:

Carry out operation BITING tonight 27th February.

Just before ten o'clock that evening, twelve converted Whitley bombers of No. 51 Squadron took off from Thruxton near Andover, loaded with 119 paratroops. On board each of the aircraft, the troops sat huddled together, cold and uncomfortable in their parachute harnesses. One of them wrote: 'The mugs of hot tea (well laced with rum) we had drunk before taking off began to scream to be let out. In that restricted space and encumbered as we were there was, alas, no way.'

It was a two-hour flight out to the dropping zone. At a quarter-past midnight on the morning of the 28th, the first sticks of paratroops leapt from their aircraft. Some ten seconds later the men tumbled down on the carpet of virgin snow, six hundred yards to the south of the radar site. They hastily threw off their parachute harness' and cocked their weapons. Each man crouched low, ready to fight for his very life, but the half-expected rattle of enemy small-arms fire did not come. Their arrival had passed unnoticed. The sound of the Whitleys' engines faded into the night, leaving the men feeling very lonely and vulnerable.

Slowly they stood up and started to move. The men assembled in small groups and there were whispered orders. The next move was not a warlike one—for that tea just had to go. Major John Frost, the force's commander, later wrote that this 'was certainly not good drill, as now was the time when a stick of parachutists was most vulnerable . . . but at least it was a gesture of defiance!'

According to the pre-arranged plan, the force split into three parties. The first section, codenamed NELSON, commanded by Lieutenant E. C. B. Charteris was to move to the beach to secure it for the withdrawal. However Lieutenant Charteris failed to arrive at the forming-up point and the Lieutenant's No. 2, Captain John Ross, in command of the heavy weapons section, was asked by Major Frost to proceed without him.

The second party itself split into three groups. JELLICOE group under Lieutenant Peter Young was to move straight to the radar installation (codenamed HENRY) followed by the RE dismantling party when it was safe to do so. Major Frost would personally lead HARDY group to capture the chateau (codenamed LONE HOUSE) whilst Lieutenant Peter Naumoff, commanding DRAKE section, would take up a position between La Presbytere Farm (codenamed RECTANGLE and where a hundred or so Germans were billeted), and the chateau.

The third group, RODNEY, under Lieutenant John Timothy, was to act as defence against attack from the inland side.

Whilst the HARDY section silently surrounded the chateau, Major Frost himself stole round to the front door which, to his surprise, was wide open. Satisfied that all was ready he gave the signal for battle to begin—four blasts on his whistle.

With four men at his heels, Major Frost entered the chateau. The ground floor was dirty and empty but firing could be heard coming from upstairs. They ran upstairs and, finding a solitary German firing on Lieutenant Young's JELLICOE party around the radar aerial, promptly killed him.

In the battle around the *Wurzburg*, Lieutenant Young's men had soon overrun the position, killing one defender, which was then quickly evacuated by the remaining Germans. One ran the wrong way towards the cliff edge, twenty yards or so away. As he was chased by the paratroopers he fell over the cliff but managed to save himself on a projecting rock. He was hauled to safety and captured.

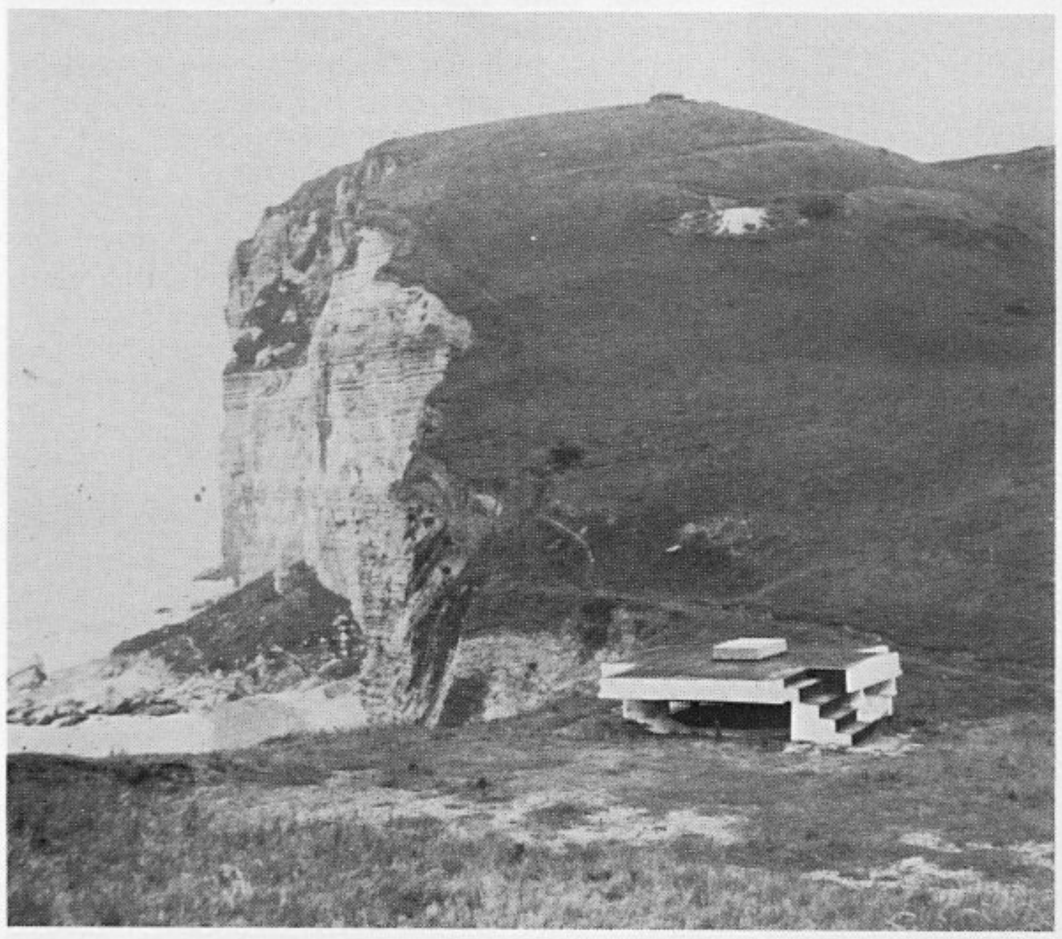
With the *Wurzburg* secured, Lieutenant Vernon scrambled up and examined it with a hand torch. Then, using a Leica, he began to photograph the aerial—an action no sooner made than regretted, since the blaze of light from the flashbulb attracted bullets from several directions. Vernon summoned the remainder of his team and ordered one sapper to saw off the aerial element while the

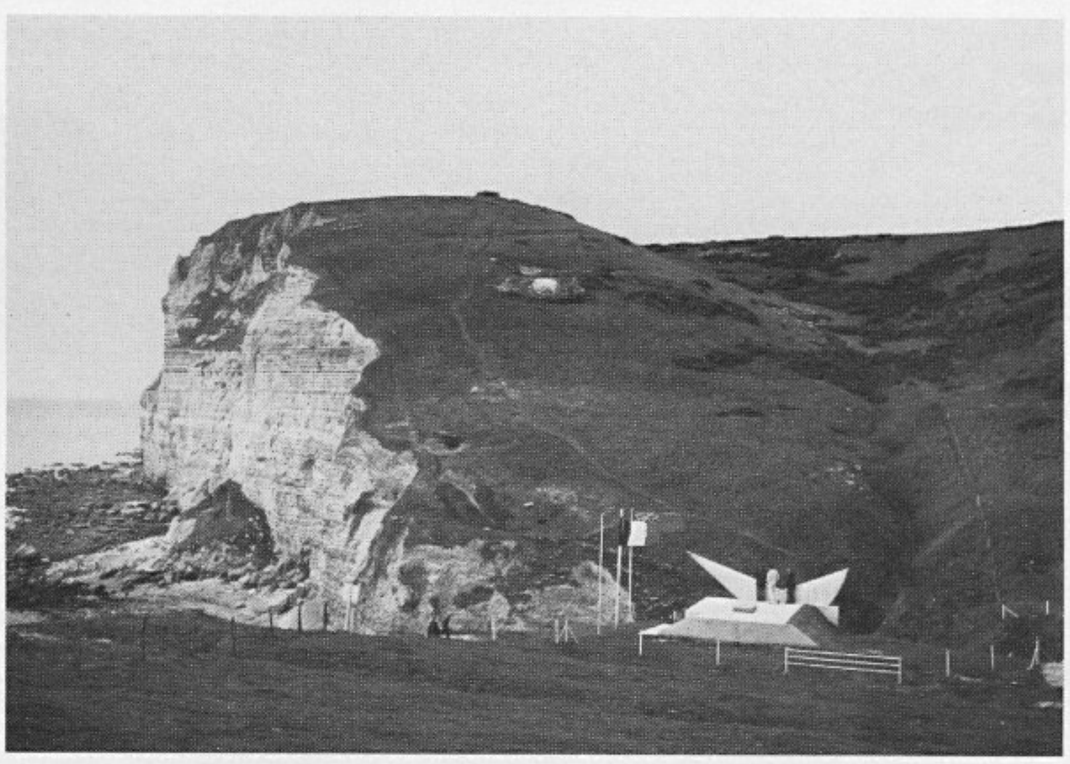
remainder removed the radar components in the operating cabin. The aerial came away easily, but the main radar equipment defied several attempts to dismantle it with screwdrivers. This was no time for finesse—the bullets ricocheting from the cabin's walls were real enough. Crow-bars were brought into play, and the radar set gave up the unequal struggle. The units were ripped out of the console.

Whilst the hand trolley, brought to transport the radar parts, was being loaded, Rifleman McIntyre was killed near the front door of the chateau. As the firing was increasing, Major Frost was concerned that if the Germans brought mortars into action, his force would be at a severe disadvantage. He decided to settle for whatever the REs had dismantled and ordered the force to withdraw to the beach.

Heavy firing had been heard from the German beach defences to the south and, as the party reached the crest of the hill, they were silhouetted against the skyline. The machine gun in the pillbox on the opposite hillside (codenamed BEACH FORT) directed its fire at them and wounded CSM Strachan. Whilst Major Frost dressed his wounds,

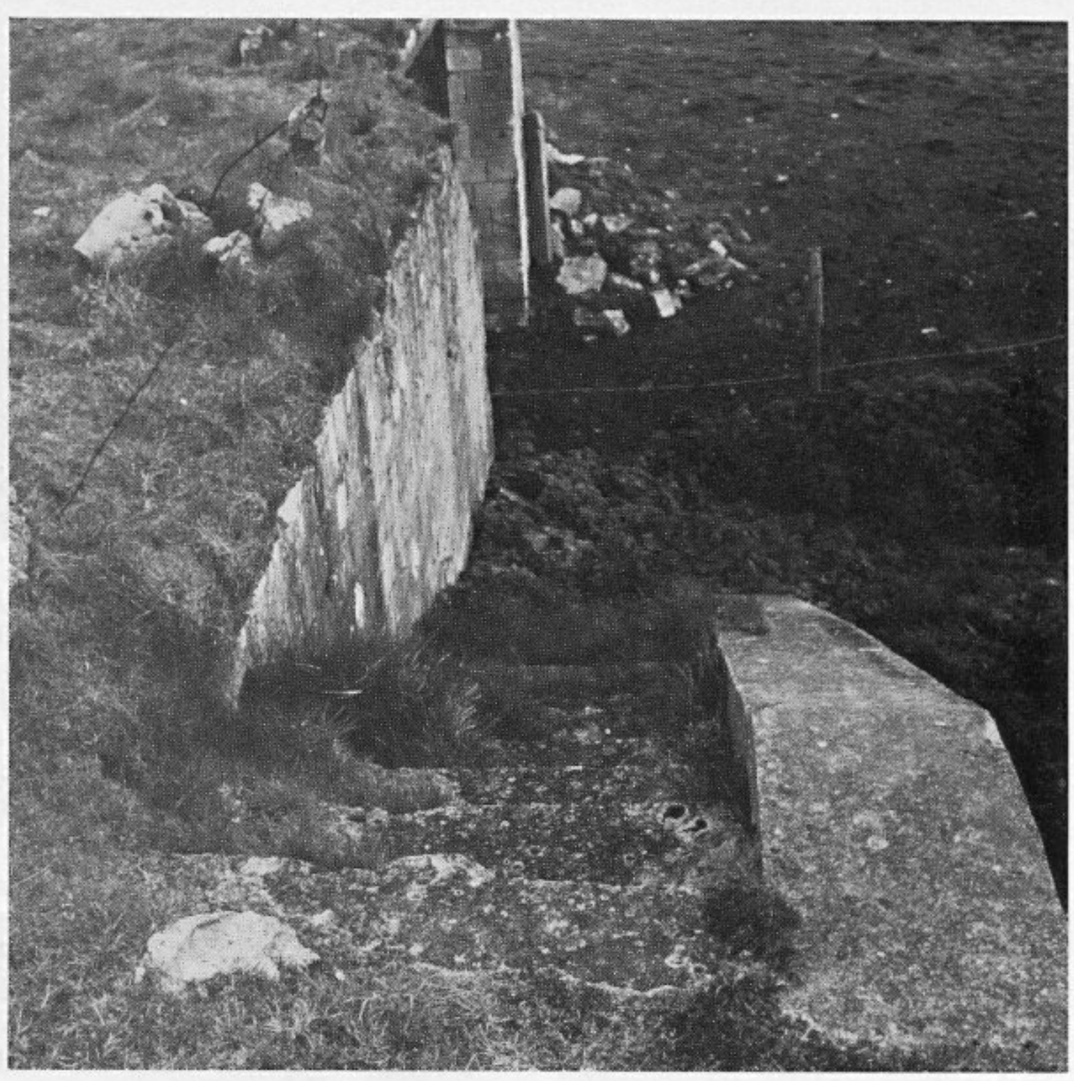
Above: The only flash photograph taken during the raid shows a double exposure—the inside of the Würzburg bowl (painted with aircraft scores) superimposed over a hutted camp presumably taken in England before the raid (Professor R. V. Jones).





Left: The view in 1961 from Beach Fort pillbox (showing the simple memorial plaque on its roof) up the hill to Redoubt on the summit. Above: The same view today showing how the new memorial has completely obliterated Beach Fort pillbox.

Above: The view looking seaward from the Chateau today. The Wurzburg aerial was roughly half way to the cliff edge. Later bomb craters are still visible.



Above: Although the Chateau was demolished in 1943, leaving only the cellar, the overgrown stairway, up which Major Frost ran to the open front door, still remains.

Left: Looking from Redoubt pillbox to the beach—the view as it was in 1961. Above: The same view today showing the new tanker port, beach 'defences', house and memorial.

beside the unmanned pillbox (codenamed REDOUBT), he heard Captain Ross call out that the beach had not yet been taken.

What had gone wrong? Of the party detailed to capture the beach, Lieutenant Charteris' men had landed three kilometres away near the hamlet of l'Enfer. Lieutenant Charteris could see from the following Whitleys, dropping their sticks further north, that they were south of Bruneval.

As they moved towards the sound of gunfire in the moonlight, a German, thinking they were his own people, joined the line. He was silently killed but they had to shoot their way around Bruneval village, manned by a reserve platoon of the First Company of the German 685th Infantry Regiment. Lieutenant Charteris led the party at the double along the valley road towards the beach. Just as Major Frost was organising his own attack from the north together with Lieutenant Naumoff's section, the missing paratroopers rushed forward shouting their war cry. Attacked from two sides, the Germans abandoned the pillbox and disappeared. As they reached the house on the beach, the villa Stella Maris, they caught a German telephonist emerging who was quickly made prisoner number two.

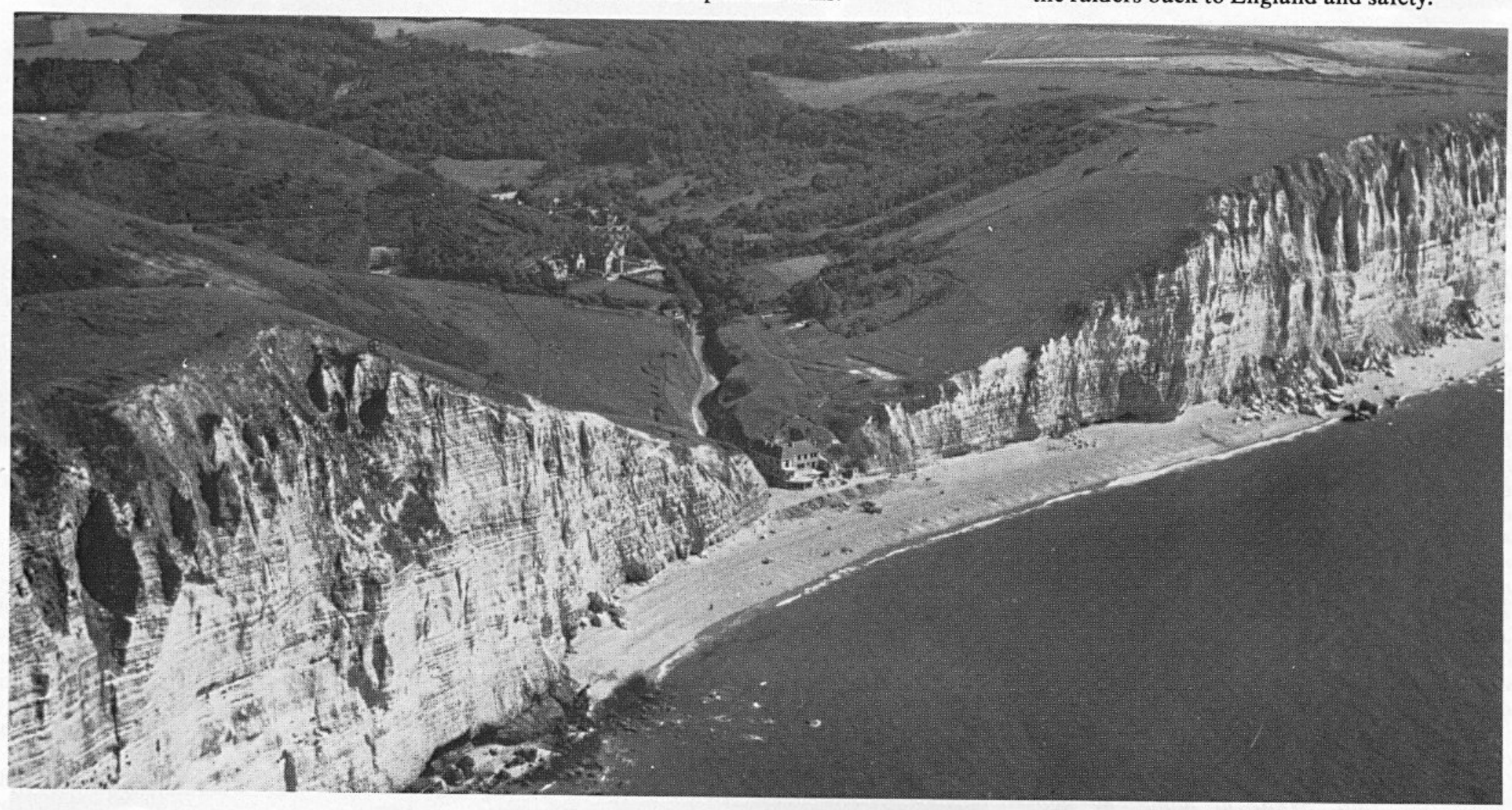
Now it was a quarter past two. The beach was in British hands, and on it lay the wounded, German prisoners and the pieces of equipment ripped from the *Wurzburg* site. Major Frost had done almost everything that had been asked of him. He told his signallers to call in the naval assault craft to evacuate his raiding force. On the cliffs on either side, the presence of German forces was becoming increasingly evident. Private Scott was killed on the beach.

After a few minutes, the signallers reported that they had had no success in contacting the boats. As a last resort, two green Verey lights were fired. Then, as Frost wrote, 'With a sinking heart, I moved off the beach with my officers to rearrange our defences. It looked as though we were going to be left high and dry, and the thought was hard to bear.'

Just as his troops began to take up positions for a final stand, Frost heard a cry: 'Sir—the boats are coming in. The boats are here! God bless the ruddy Navy, sir!' Frost looked back and saw that six assault craft had slid to a stop on the beach. With a sigh of relief he ordered his men to embark. From the boats themselves, covering fire was poured on to the Germans at the top of the cliffs.

First on board were the men of the dismantling party—carrying the precious pieces of the radar's equipment. Then came the prisoners and the wounded, and finally the rest of the paratroops followed. The landing craft backed away from the shore, while the brisk exchange of fire continued until long after the boats were clear.

Safe aboard an assault craft, Major Frost learned the reason for the delay. While he had actually been signalling, a German destroyer and two E-boats had passed within a mile of the small British flotilla. Fortunately they had noticed nothing. Frost also learned that the pieces of the radar set secured by his men were almost exactly what had been needed. Mr. D. H. Priest, a Telecommunications Research Establishment engineer who had received a temporary commission as a flight lieutenant for the occasion, had examined the booty on the boat. Had the coast been sufficiently clear, he would have landed and looked over the actual *Wurzburg* site, but this was not possible now of course. By the time dawn broke, the force of returning assault craft was only fifteen miles off the French coast. Several Spitfires arrived overhead, and these escorted the raiders back to England and safety.



The beach and the Villa Stella Maris as it appeared on the night of the raid.

Above: Lieutenant-Colonel John Goschen questions Major Frost the morning after the raid (IWM). Right: Unfortunately we have been unable to name the two German prisoners (we believe the radar operator is on the left and telephonist on the right) brought back to England. Note the telephonist has already had the eagle emblem cut off his tunic (IWM).

The Bruneval operation had been successful on almost every count: the men had captured most of the radar and two prisoners, one of whom was a radar operator. The paratroops' own casualties numbered fourteen—two dead, Privates McIntyre and Scott, six wounded and six missing. The dismantling party had done extremely well in the brief time available for pulling the Wurzburg set apart: the units they had brought back included the receiver, the receiver amplifier, the modulator—the device controlling the timing within the radar—and the transmitter; in addition, they had the sawn-off aerial element. The only unit which Dr. Jones had requested and not received was the presentation equipment. There had been no time to rip this away before Frost gave the order to withdraw.

The labels, themselves, on the equipment brought back, gave Dr. Jones considerable information. These showed that the set had been constructed by Telefunken, a company with its main factories in the Berlin area. The works-numbers were particularly interesting: from previous experience with similar serial numbers, Jones deduced that that allocated to the first production model of each component was 40,000. The earliest number he found in the captured units was 40,144, and the latest was 41,093; this suggested that the total number of sets of components manufactured by the date of manufacture of the last item was 1,093. The earliest inspection date, early November 1940, was stamped on a part of the transmitter; the latest, August 19, 1941, was on the aerial.

Scientists at the Telecommunications Research Establishment at Swanage made a thorough examination of the pieces brought back from Bruneval. They noted that the equipment was 'straight-forward and in no respect is it brilliant. . . On the other hand it must be remembered that the equipment was made in 1940 and designed in 1939 or earlier'. The German radar did not carry any specific anti-jamming circuitry; but on the other hand it could be tuned over a wide range, a feature which would make electronic jamming very difficult.

During the subsequent interrogations, one of the German prisoners mentioned that he had been on leave in Germany the month before the raid. While at home, he had mentioned to his wife that his station was so isolated that the British might easily make a

Above: Admiral Louis Mountbatten with Major-General Frost (who was awarded the Military Cross for his part in the operation) at the unveiling of the new memorial in 1975. Below: Veterans of 2nd Battalion on the site of the chateau during our return visit.

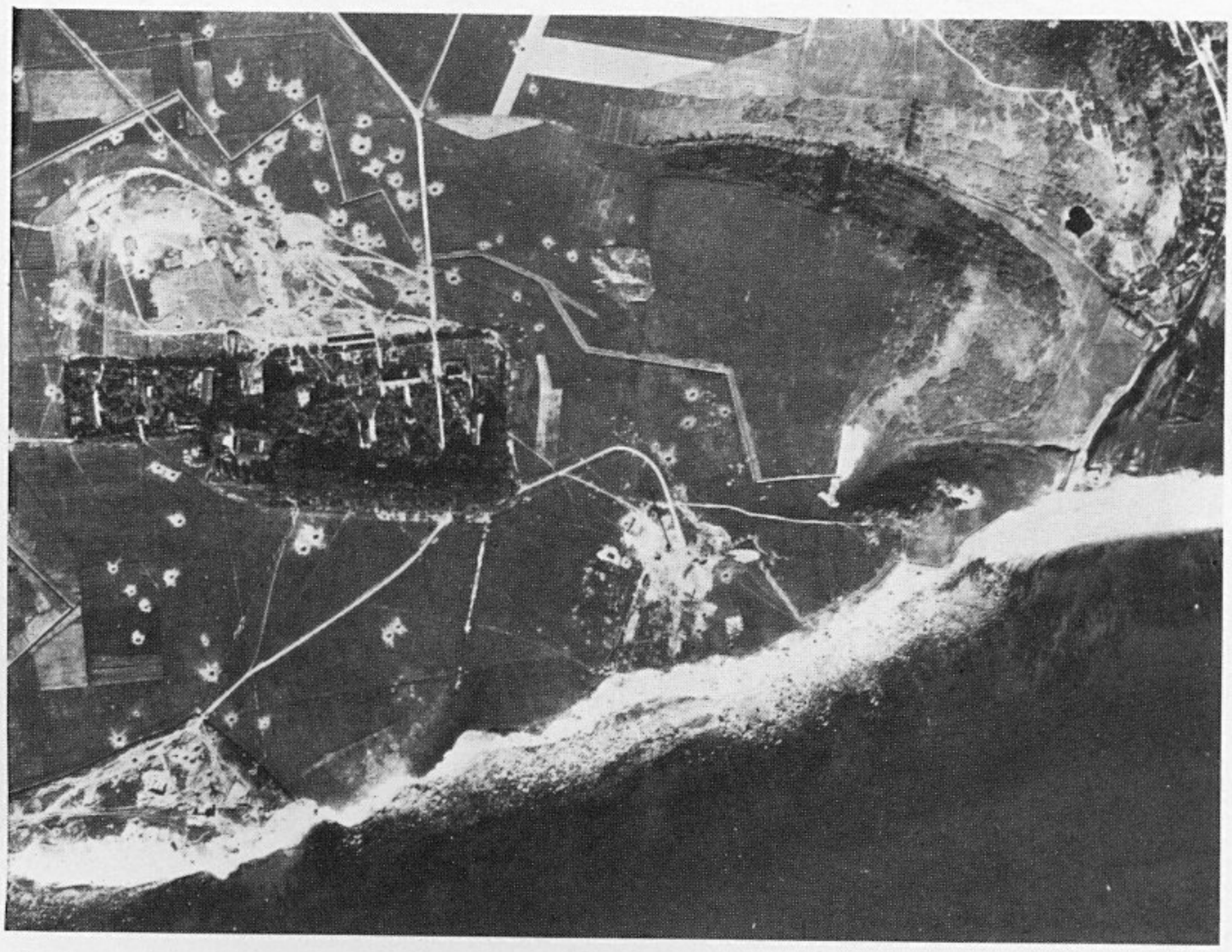
raid and capture it. Was his wife, he wondered, perhaps a British agent?

At Bruneval steps were taken to ensure against a repetition of the raid. The remains of the Wurzburg were removed and a new one set up in the Freya compound to the north, the whole site being surrounded by barbed wire. At the same time, barbed wire entanglements were installed around other coastal radar stations, making them conspicuous to aerial reconnaissance, and obligingly, confirming Dr. Jones suspicions about other suspect sites!

Later in 1942, the Germans began to develop the Bruneval radar site and new bunkers were constructed. The chateau, probably because it was a conspicuous landmark, was demolished and the cellar converted into a shelter. Then, prior to the D-Day landings in 1944, the whole area was bombed by the Allies.

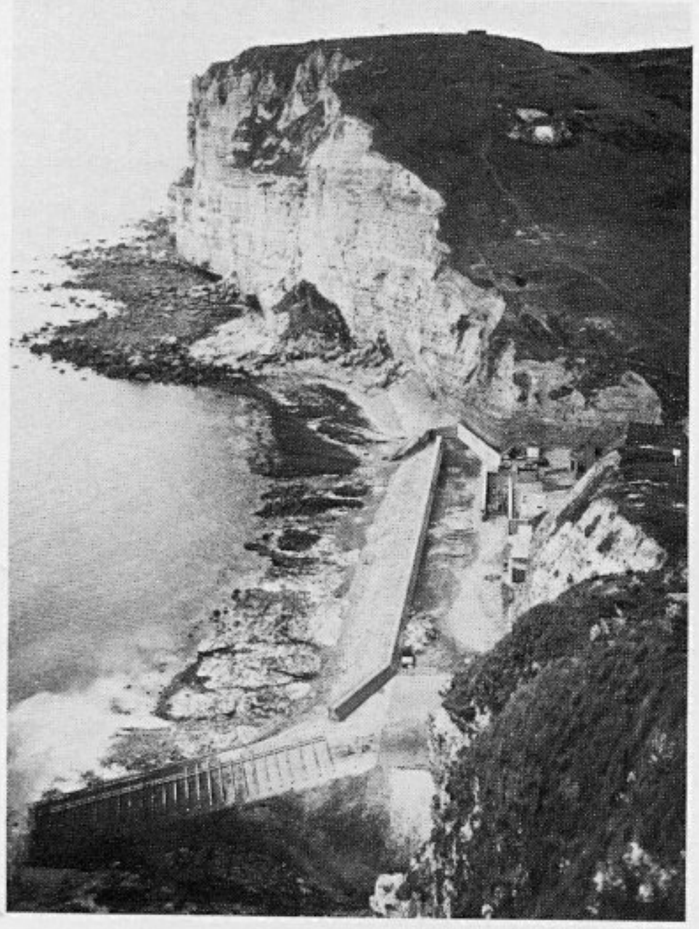
The editor first visited the Bruneval site in 1961. In 1948, General de Gaulle had unveiled a simple plaque on the roof of the BEACH FORT pillbox commemorating the raid and, except for the later German constructions on the radar site, the beach, the house Stella Maris and surrounding area was unspoilt and could be seen virtually as it was in 1942.

It was not until April 1976 that the opportunity came to re-visit the site and we flew back to Bruneval accompanied by veterans of the 2nd Parachute Battalion. There we re-created the 'dicing' mission of Tony Hill, taking a photograph comparable to his oblique of the site. Sadly, Squadron Leader Tony Hill, DSO, DFC and Bar, ace photo-reconnaissance pilot, was shot down on October 18, 1942 on a low-level operation over Le Creusot in south-east France whilst serving with 543 Squadron. He broke his back in the crash but was rescued by the French Resistance. A special aircraft was laid on to fly him to England but as he was being carried to the plane on November 12, he died. (He was buried in the Allied plot in Dijon les Pejoces Communal Cemetery, in grave No. 30.)



Above: This reconnaisance photograph, taken on June 24, 1944 after the pre D-Day bombing, shows the zig-zag trench constructed to protect the entire site (Crown Copyright via Keele University).

The graves of Private Alan Scott and Rifleman Hugh McIntyre. The men were buried by the Germans at Le Havre and their sacrifice has largely been forgotten in all the published histories on Bruneval.



The beach as it is today.

When we reached the beach, we saw to our horror that it was now covered with concrete and criss-crossed by sea walls. We were told this was done in 1975 as part of the massive oil tanker dock now being constructed only three hundred metres south of the beach. A new house has been built on the hillside and, in typical French fashion, the original pillbox has been covered with earth to make a base for a massive new memorial — completely obliterating the originality of the place as it was!

Private Alan Scott of the 9th Battalion, Royal Berkshire Regiment and Rifleman Hugh McIntyre of the 9th Battalion, The Cameronian Scottish Rifles, both killed at Bruneval, are buried side by side in Ste Marie Cemetery in Le Havre—in Division 67, Row E, graves 3 and 4.

Four of the missing members of 'C' Company were captured immediately by the Germans. The other two were sheltered by M. Maurice de la Joie and his wife and sister until they were all arrested trying to cross the Demarcation line at Blere.

Only eight veterans of the Bruneval raid survived the war. Among them was the Commander, Major (now Major-General) John Frost who has returned several times to Bruneval, most recently with Admiral Mountbatten to the unveiling of the new memorial in 1975.

We are very appreciative to Major-General Frost for the help he has given us in the preparation of this article.

We made exhaustive investigations to trace the present-day location of the radar parts brought back to England. They are not at the Royal Signals and Radar Establishment at Malvern, Worcestershire. All their captured material was scrapped in 1946. The other likely location, the Royal Aircraft Establishment at Farnborough, also cannot trace it. There is nothing at the Imperial War Museum. The only possibility is the Science Museum which has Wurzburg radar parts in store. There is no exact inventory or provenance for these items, so it now seems impossible to locate the Bruneval set today.

BORATEROM